

Archive of Our Own

On the Archive of Our Own (AO3), users can create works, bookmarks, comments, tags, and other [Content](http://archiveofourown.org/tos_faq#define_content) (http://archiveofourown.org/tos_faq#define_content). Any information you publish on AO3 may be accessible by the public, AO3 users, and/or AO3 personnel. Be mindful when sharing personal information, including but not limited to your name, email, age, location, personal relationships, gender or sexual identity, racial or ethnic background, religious or political views, and/or account usernames for other sites.

To learn more, check out our [Terms of Service](http://archiveofourown.org/tos) (<http://archiveofourown.org/tos>), including the [Content Policy](http://archiveofourown.org/content) (<http://archiveofourown.org/content>) and [Privacy Policy](http://archiveofourown.org/privacy) (<http://archiveofourown.org/privacy>).

I have read & understood the 2024 Terms of Service, including the Content Policy and Privacy Policy.

By checking this box, you consent to the processing of your personal data in the United States and other jurisdictions in connection with our provision of AO3 and its related services to you. You acknowledge that the data privacy laws of such jurisdictions may differ from those provided in your jurisdiction. For more information about how your personal data will be processed, please refer to our Privacy Policy.

☐ I agree/consent to these Terms

Копия страницы Актуальная страни... [🔗 \(https://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234?view_full_work=true\)](https://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234?view_full_work=true)

От 01 октября 2025 05:40:08 GMT. Яндекс не связан с авторами и содержимым страницы

 **Полная версия**  **Только текст** (<https://yandexwebcache.net/yandbtm?fmode=inject&tm=1770537968&tld=by>)

Important message:

1. You are using a proxy site that is not part of the Archive of Our Own.
2. The entity that set up the proxy site can see what you submit, including your IP address. If you log in through the proxy site, it can see your password.

Важная информация:

1. Вы используете прокси-сайт, который не является частью АОЗ (Нашего Архива).
2. Субъект, настроивший прокси-сайт, может видеть, что вы отправляете, включая ваш IP-адрес. Если вы авторизуетесь через прокси-сайт, он может видеть ваш пароль.

Важливе повідомлення:

1. Ви використовуєте проксі-сайт, який не є частиною Archive of Our Own (Нашого Власного Архіву).
2. Творці цього проксі-сайту можуть бачити Ваші дані та дії, а також Вашу IP-адресу. Якщо Ви входите до свого облікового запису, використовуючи проксі-сайт, його творці можуть бачити Ваш пароль.

重要提示:

1. 您使用的是第三方开发的反向代理网站，此网站并非Archive of Our Own - AO3（AO3作品库）原站。
2. 代理网站的开发者能够获取您上传至该站点的全部内容，包括您的ip地址。如您通过代理登录AO3，对方将获得您的密码。

Teen And Up Audiences

No Archive Warnings Apply

M/M

Stray Kids (Band)

Bang Chan/Han Jisung/Hwang Hyunjin/Kim Seungmin/Lee Felix/Lee Minho/Seo Changbin/Yang Jeongin
Lee Felix (Stray Kids)/Everyone
Hwang Hyunjin/Lee Felix
Lee Felix/Seo Changbin
Bang Chan/Lee Felix (Stray Kids)
Han Jisung | Han/Lee Felix
Lee Felix/Lee Minho | Lee Know
Lee Felix/Yang Jeongin | I.N
Lee Felix (Stray Kids) & Everyone

Lee Felix (Stray Kids)
Lee Minho | Lee Know
Bang Chan (Stray Kids)
Kim Seungmin (Stray Kids)
Hwang Hyunjin
Seo Changbin
Yang Jeongin | I.N
Han Jisung | Han

Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics
Omega Verse
Omega Lee Felix (Stray Kids)
Alpha Hwang Hyunjin
Alpha Lee Minho | Lee Know
Beta Hwang Hyunjin
Alpha Seo Changbin
Omega Han Jisung | Han
Beta Kim Seungmin (Stray Kids)
Alpha Yang Jeongin | I.N
Pack Bonding
Pack Dynamics
Nesting
POV Lee Felix (Stray Kids)
Boys In Love
Wolf Instincts
Wolf Pack
Sleepy Cuddles
Love
Falling In Love
Forbidden Love
Enemy Lovers
Alpha Bang Chan (Stray Kids)
felix is hurt
enemy Felix
War
Fighting
Misunderstood Felix

Alpha/Omega
Felix in love
Lee Felix-centric (Stray Kids)
Wolf Sex
Knotting
English

never say goodbye (because we walk the same dream)

Emmyxx

Summary:

He felt it instantly, like a broken line that finally seemed to join together linking them forever. Nothing would be able to break it.

"Chan-hyung." He said in total awe and shock. "You need to see him."

or

after a 30-year-war the stray kids pack find there final mate and find that he is in fact the enemy that they want to kill.

Notes:

Welcome ladies and gents to my newest story!!

I hope you enjoy!

Chapter 1 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/133022725>): the revolution

Everyone knew the story of the Red Alpha in Levander.

They had been at war for years, with the so-called Red Alpha and his followers believing that he should be on the throne, not the current King who was still too young and inexperienced to be leading a kingdom.

But last year, the tide in the war had changed when the King had caught several of the high up followers of the Red Alpha, all of which became informants, which had drastically changed a 30-year war.

Most of the Red Alpha's stronghold and followers have been wiped out, with only one small camp that had been left, a camp which the King had recently had his forces attacked and caught the few amount of followers left, alongside the Red Alpha himself.

The King had ordered that survivors had to be brought back to the capital for a public hanging and the execution of the men who had caused years of bloodshed and death.

Most had died at the hands of the soldiers and killed themselves instead of being handed over to the hands of those in Levander, the Red Alpha had been one of those, but was caught.

Now only thirteen of them remained.

For days, they were treated like animals carted back from the journey North to the capital of Levander, full of life and thriving.

It was a hard swallow as they were led through the gates and into the capital. People stopped and stared at them and spat at them, shouting abuse and if the soldiers hadn't been there, Felix fears that they would have been trampled to death.

Part of him wishes they had killed him and his Alpha during the attack, but being paraded around like a spectacle, to hang their bodies for all the capital to see, that fate was much worse.

It didn't help that they were all still dressed in their underclothes, drenched with the blood of their enemies and friends.

The attack had come with no warning, the alarm being sounded as people were being dragged from their bed, and fighting for their lives. It had barely been a battle, but instead an ambush.

"So um...what's the plan here?" One of the younger omega recruits says, a few rows back from Felix half-whispered to who was next to him.

"Plan?" He recognised Joon's, he must be near the back of them.

They had all been chained together with one long silver chains for their wrists and ankles and made to walk single file with about one hundred soldiers spread out in front, behind and around them.

There was no way of escaping, instead all they could do was walk. Walk to their death.

"How do you suggest we escape? This place is crawling with soldiers and we stand out like sore thumbs. There is no plan." One the last surviving alphas of the movement snarled at the young omega.

"But...what will they do with us?"

"If we're lucky, kill us quickly and not torture us." Joon replied to the omega without missing a beat.

Felix can imagine the young omega's face paling. He had been new to the movement, and hadn't seen much real fighting until the ambush, a part of Felix did feel sorry for him, but death was part of the world, part of their life. A path that had been chosen for Felix.

"What? They would do that?"

"Of course.

"Enough. There are too many ears for this sort of talk. No more talking. To anyone."

"Yes alpha." They replied back to him quietly."

There was no more talk between the wolves as they were led into the side door of the castle, and into the darkness of what looked to be the castle dungeon. Felix wished he felt something, he wished he felt anything, but there was nothing.

Their alpha had told them what to expect, told them not what to do.

The thirteen of them were split in two. Six of them in one cell, the seven with the alpha in the other. Still chained, the doors were slammed close behind them and then they were left with only the rats for company.

Felix hoped that they would make it quick.

It was a heavy burden to be a King. A burden that Chan had been born into. His parents had fought for years to protect wolves from slavery and violence. It was something that he had now managed to successfully complete.

For years they had been at war with the Red alpha and his followers. But by the end of today, that would no longer be the case. The last remaining hide out of his followers had now been destroyed and all that remained was the Red alpha himself and the last remaining of his followers.

He and his mates had watched from the windows of the castle as they had been brought in earlier. Chan hadn't been able to keep the smile off of his face, by tomorrow the Red alpha and his followers would be gone.

"You've done it." Chan turned from the window to the familiar voice of one of his mates.

"We did it." Chan corrects the beta, who moves from behind him to lean against the wall next to the window.

"There in the cells. Will you execute them all?" Seungmin asks with raised eyebrows to the alpha.

Chan was known to be ruthless when it came to the red Alpha, but it was well-known among them that some of his mates had hesitations when it came to killing all of the followers.

"No." Chan says. "We need information after all. We need to make sure there really are no more hide-outs for them."

Seungmin nods in agreement with his decision.

"Where are the others?"

"They're all waiting. They sent me to get you." Seungmin answered looking across towards the large wooden double doors.

Chan extends his hand with a small to one of his younger mates. "We shouldn't keep them waiting should we?"

Seungmin rolls his eyes but takes his alpha's hand and allows him to be led into the main hall.

It's hours before they come for Felix and the others. Hours of wearing silver chains and being bundled up in a ball on the floor. It didn't help that it was freezing as well, but finally the guards appeared and walked straight past the first cell where his alpha was and headed to the second where the other six of them had been forced into.

They were all dragged by hands from the cell and back out into a line, the silver on their wrists and legs making them too weak to even consider shifting or fighting back. Felix wouldn't have been able to fight even if he was ordered too, he was too weak. Days or hardly any water or food have taken its toll on him.

"Remember the plan." The Red Alpha hissed in a half-whisper as they were led away.

The plan was simple really, say nothing and then die. It was the only option they had left now, their fate had been sealed when they hadn't been able to flee the site.

Felix stumbles behind the others as he's led out the darkness and into the light of the palace. He takes in the paintings on the walls, the clean floor, the cleanliness of it all, and it makes him angry. They really had everything?

When everyone else had nothing.

They stop outside a large wooden door and Felix almost trips over his feet, as the doors are opened and they are practically shoved through it.

The King was there. He could smell him. Even his scent smelled like power and fire. Felix hadn't even set eyes on him yet and he knew he was there. But behind the scent of power, there were others, a sweet caramel, a minty

citrus and a few others that he couldn't make out.

He was amazed at this point, the scent blockers on his skin were still working, but it was probably for the best, who knew how all of them would smell like right now? A mixture of defeat, sadness, panic and terror.

Felix didn't have a chance to look at the King before he was forced onto his knees, hitting the flooring with a crack, but strangely at this point he could barely feel it. All six of them on their knees.

When Felix finally looked up, he didn't count three or four wolves, but instead he found seven sitting around a large wooden table. The black-haired one in the middle was obviously the King, but the others surprised him.

It was a well-known story about the King and his mates. How he found each mate as he won each battle, one of each taken from their home land and brought to the castle, how each had their own special skills to help run the kingdom. It was part of the reason why the Red alpha had struggled for so long.

But for all of them to be here? It didn't sit right with Felix.

The silence was deafening. Felix could feel right through his bones, as the stares from the King and the Princes bore into them.

Next to him...was shaking. Felix kept his head low to the ground, not directly making eye contact with any of them. If anything Felix has learned from his life, being invisible was one of the best ways to go unnoticed.

"In the morning you'll all hang in the courtyard." An eerily calm voice called out. "But we're willing to let you forgo that in exchange for something else."

Information. Felix knows this, knows that they want confirmation from them. He was expecting it to be tortured out of them, not for them to ask and Felix knew this trick. It was the oldest one in the book, they always kill you anyway.

"We already know everything, we've had informants in the camp and our own soldiers have told us the details. However we need to better understand your leader, to make sure nothing like this ever happens again." The voice adds.

Finally Felix can't help his curiosity. He looks up towards the smell and voices and freezes. They smelled of power, all of them, even the way they sat around the table.

He quickly lowered his head back down again hoping not to have gained attention.

"We're willing to be very generous considering what you have done, if you tell us about your alpha." The eerie voice almost sounds sweet, in a terrifying sort of way.

"We're not traitors." Grumbled one of the older betas.

"None of them will ever breathe a word, especially not to a bunch of ill bred mutts." The Red Alpha that was to the right of him snarled.

A silence fell across the room at his words. It was so quick, a knife could cut through it, no one dared to even breathe at his words. It felt like hours of silence hung in the air, but in reality it was probably only a few seconds.

But then the sound of a loud slap broke through it and Felix could see from the corner of the eye, it hadn't been the King who had hit his leader, but one of the King's mates, one of the smaller ones with dark hair, he was an alpha as well.

His hand reached out and wrapped around his throat in a tight vice and he squeezed.

"I've dreamed about this moment for a very long time. All the ways that I would make you suffer, all the ways that I would make you scream, how I could try to make you suffer even just an inch of the moment of people you killed. Good people." He snarled into the alpha's face.

"Do it." He choked out, not even fighting in the alphas hold. "No one will ever speak."

The alpha growled and his hands tightened on his neck, and Felix looked away back to the ground, he couldn't physically look anymore.

"Changbin." The voice of the King called out to him. "Enough."

The red alpha collapsed like a sack of potatoes to the floor when Changbin released his hold on him, but he didn't seem particularly happy about it.

"Take him back downstairs. Keep him away from the others on his own." A new lighter sounding voice commanded.

Felix met Joon's eyes across the line and could only watch as they dragged the struggling alpha back to the dungeons, the doors slammed behind them and then there was silence.

"Now what was I saying? Ahh yes. Tell us about your leader or you'll hang."

No one speaks.

There were footsteps again getting closer to them, until they stopped right in front of him and finally he felt a hand jerk his head back and he was faced with one the most beautiful betas that he had ever seen.

He felt it instantly, like a broken line that finally seemed to join together linking them forever. Nothing would be able to break it, then he met the eyes of the tall blonde haired beta.

They stared at each other in shock for a few moments, Felix visabile beginning to shake at the sudden intensity of whatever sort of thing had clicked into place.

“Jinnie?” A voice called, sounding almost confused.

The beta, Jinnie blinked and looked away from him towards where the King and the others were gazing at him with a worried sort of curiosity. Felix was breathing heavily, and almost couldn't look away from him.

“Chan-hyung.” The beta said. “You need to see him.”

The seven royal wolves all seemed curious, but the King stood up with an almost frown on his face and walked towards the beta slowly. Felix tries to tilt his head to get the beta to loosen his grip, but he turns back towards him and catches his eye and Felix stops.

He can feel all the eyes on him as well, from the others who are in the line next to him, from the guards and royal pack, everyone was looking at him.

The King, slightly smaller than the beta, stopped in front of him and the hand in Felix's hair yanked his head harder making his head tilt back further to meet the dark of the eyes of the King.

It almost felt like they were boring into his soul and Felix wanted to flinch away from him, but he felt the tiny glimmer of a connection between them.

He looked to Jinnie and the two seemed to have some sort of silent conversation between them before the King knelt down in front of him and Felix almost felt himself stop breathing, as his hand reached out and raised his chin.

“What's your name?” He asked, almost examining Felix in a way.

Felix opened his mouth to answer, but the hand on his hair dropped and his head fell forward and Felix vomited over the King's shoes.

Chapter 2 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/133442839>): the decision

Notes:

Here's another chapter. I'll try and update next week. Plan is to update my other story this week and then will get back to writing this.

The rest is a funny kind of blur for Felix, he vaguely remembers cursing and his head almost hitting the tiles, he remembers being taken away, he sees faces. Seven of them. He hears the calls of his fellow prisoners, but he's not there, not really.

It's like a daydream to him.

When he finally comes too, he's not in the cells, or the floor, but on a bed, a lumpy one, but he's still dazed and confused about exactly what's going on. He still feels dizzy and his head is pounding, but at least he's alive and breathing still.

He's not sure how he still is, but at least he is.

“You up?” A voice calls and startles him and he finally notices the guard near the door, watching him with suspension.

“Ye.” He answers his voice, a rough and chalky sound.

“Good.” He replies. “The King wants to see you.”

There's only three of them this time, but it feels different. In a different room, and although the silver chains remain on his wrists, he's at least sat down in a plush seat, and then the guards disappear, leaving Felix with three alphas.

Three alphas and one was the King.

“Well.” The grey haired one says looking at him. “You're certainly a complication. We've always known we would have another mate, but to have one that is an enemy, that's quite something.”

Mate? Felix thought. What was he talking about? He wasn't meaning Felix surely? He didn't have a mate and it certainly was not these wolves.

Somehow Felix finds his voice among the alphas. “I'm not your mate.”

The shorter one sighs almost as if pained at what Felix is saying, but just gives him a hard glare. “Don't play stupid, omega. Pretend all you want, but you are yours.”

Felix had to bite back a growl at that, all his life he had been someone else's, as if he was property given to the highest bidder. He wasn't anyone's mate and he didn't belong to anyone for that matter.

“I belong to no one.” He said quietly looking at them all.

The grey haired one got up and moved closer to him, until he was leaning on the table near where Felix was sitting.

“You're yours. Like how we're yours in a way. You felt it didn't you? That click in your head, the way everything feels complete now don't you? That's us.” He told him, clicking his teeth as he did.

There was a sharp intake from across the room but Felix didn't quite know which of the alphas made the sound, but he was too busy in his thoughts. He had felt it, like a click, almost an instant connection that happened when he had

looked at the beta and then the same with the King.

"You know the King, Channie, and Changbinnie, our general and then I'm Minho." He continued talking without thinking about it.

"What's your name?" Minho added then.

Felix went to open his mouth, but stopped. He remembered the red alpha's words and they were right, anything they new about him they could use against them, even if they claimed to be his mates, even if that was the cause.

"You know we can find out, even if you don't tell us?" The voice of Chan called out from across the room.

"We're going to find out everything about you, there's already people working on that, and we will find out, but it would be easier if you told us." He stated as he leaned back further into the chair.

Felix still said nothing, it was easier that way, this whole thing still felt like some sort of deranged nightmare.

"Fine little omega, say nothing. Somehow I don't think that will last." Chan was looking at him with such a look of uncertainty and intensity it made Felix want to disappear.

"We're still deciding what to do with you. All of us have spoken and have decided for now you'll stay in one of the rooms above the dungeons under guard, until we know more about you." The King told him directly not to look away.

Felix almost frowned, weren't they going to kill him? Wasn't there a plan to kill all the traitors? What were they thinking?

"Don't even think of trying anything." Changbin growled at him. "I'll hunt you down."

"Don't worry pretty, that's Binnie's way of saying he likes you. You're very pretty after all, but he is right. Stay put and rest, a bond with eight wolves can take a toll when it first happens." Minho tells him with a sort of a smirk.

The smirk sends shivers down Felix's spine.

Minho watches as Felix is led away without missing a beat. The omega barely fought against it, probably wary from the bond and everything he had gone through the last few days.

He casts an eye on his mates, both who look far from happy. Out of them all, Minho knew it would be Chan and Changbin that would struggle the most with this. Changbin has been a soldier and had fought the red alphas forces, he had seen countless deaths, whereas the war haunted Chan.

"Well that was..." Minho trails off unsurely of exactly what to say to try and ease some of the weight on his mates shoulders.

"A disaster." Changbin replies, sounding beyond stressed. "A disaster. Why...why of all wolves did it have to be him?"

"Bin." Minho moves more towards the alpha and places a hand on his shoulder to try and reassure him.

"He's right." Chan's voice replies. "This couldn't get any worse. What do we do with him? How are we ever going to explain that our final mate is an enemy? He's probably killed our wolves."

"You don't know Chan-hyung. Right now we don't know enough to make those kinds of conclusions, but for now we keep him out of the public eye. Out of sight." Minho tells them both thinking about how they could keep this a secret.

"No one goes near him. Not the others." Changbin says sharply, looking at Minho. "He's dangerous."

"I agree with Bin. For now, the others keep their distance until we know more about him." Chan declares standing from the seat sighing wearily at the full thing.

"Let's get to bed, it's been a long day for all of us." Chan tells the two other alphas.

The guard wakes Felix the next day, with fresh clothes, a basin of water and some bread, before he leaves. Felix devours the bread before surveying the clothes, plain white trousers and a light blue jumper.

He half-debates on ignoring the clothes, but his own are covered in filth and blood, but what he is grateful for is for the warm water. It feels like it's been years since he was able to bathe so wiping the dirt and water off himself is a welcome relief.

He does put the new clothes on as much as he doesn't want to, but he's still full of questions. Questions about what's going to happen to him and those he was with and his leader.

He had hardly slept last night, tossing and turning and although he was exhausted it was hard for him to turn his mind off, it had too many questions, because how could his soulmates be them?

How could it be them?

Felix doesn't have too much time to dwell on it because after he's finished the last piece of bread, the silver cuffs are back on his wrists and he's been led once again out the room.

They take him a different way from yesterday, but all Felix can really hear is the wolves, those outside of the walls of the castles. There's so much noise for some reason.

"It must be starting soon." One of the guards, a beta mumbled to the other.

Felix frowned in confusion, wondering what exactly he was talking about.

"It already had when I was out earlier."

He frowns and as he passes a window, he sees the crowds and then the words come flooding back to him. Tomorrow...hang...courtyard.

Would they really? Would he really hang them? Surely not.

Felix stops walking and tries to stand taller and higher on the balls of his feet to see, but the windows are too high and he's too far down and the silver cuffs are heavy on his arms.

"What happened?" Felix speaks for the first time to the two guards, not really expecting an answer.

"You should be more worried about yourself, little omega. But then again, he won't hang you. The only ones who hung were those scum's followers." He replied back to Felix.

Felix felt his entire world drop then, was it really true? Were they all dead?

Those were good wolves, they had been Felix's family for a long time and now, were they all gone?

Why was he still here then? Because of his stupid soulmates? At this point he would rather have been hung than dealt with this. What sort of fate was this?

It's what you deserve.

But really what would happen to him? Would he be kept under lock and key all his life? It wasn't as if they would ever accept him, knowing who he was and where his loyalties lay.

He didn't even have time to grieve over the loss of his friends, his comrades in arms, instead he would have to put on a brave face in front of the monsters that had killed them.

It was...brutal.

He was lost in thoughts until finally they stopped outside, what looked like a different door, it looked different from the last time.

The door opened and he was shoved forward and the doors behind him closed, and that was it.

He observed the room, it was different. Hardly what he was expecting, it almost looked like a large apartment, there were multiple different doors that he had no idea where they would lead to and this almost seemed like a large sort of sitting area.

This couldn't be...surely they hadn't brought him to their personal rooms? That couldn't be right.

He frowned and spun around, yet he was alone. They had left him alone?

Felix tried to open the doors, but found it had been locked shut behind him, before he saw the large window in the corner and quickly moved towards it.

He pulled at it lightly, but to his frustration it was locked, he turned around and sighed, before surveying the area and moved towards the large bookcase, where he fingered through some of the books easily, it was history book after history book it seemed.

Really? That was all they read.

"History not to your liking?" Felix is ashamed to admit that he jumped at the familiar sounding voice.

Chapter 3 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/133637410>): **six days**

He turns and finds one of his sharp-eyed mates. The one that had spoken to him yesterday. Silver-tongued is what he thinks of when he thinks of him. Minho.

The second oldest mate of the King. For some reason he reminds Felix of a snake, those sharp and serious eyes are the worst, but it's not just the snake.

It's another. It was him. The one Felix had looked at when he had found out who his mates were. He's taller than the other one, even though he's leaning against a bookcase.

The beta. Jinnie, Felix was sure he was called or what they called him.

Something flared inside of Felix as he surveyed the two of them and he pushed it back down.

As much as he wanted, he couldn't be swayed by their good looks, but the biological element of having a mate was still present. It always would be.

"Not yours, no." Felix answers, snapping out of whatever brainless state he was in and looks to the pair.

The beta straightens and gazes and tilts his head towards him, as if examining him.

Felix fought the urge to flinch and remained strong and unmoving in his unflickering gaze from the beta.

"I'm sure you'll find something that'll interest you. The private library has plenty to keep you occupied for the time being." Minho breaks the stalemate between the two.

Felix lifts an eyebrow confused. "Occupied?"

"That's right. I suppose you'll need something to do during the day. Maybe you'll learn something, that is if you can even read?" Jinnie answers before Minho can.

Felix's nostrils flare at the insult. "Of course I can read."

Jinnie holds his hand up mockingly. "Just checking. Most of the mutts from your alpha were illiterate. Mind you, some could barely speak. Don't you get taught that or are you just fighting dogs?"

Felix growls at the beta. "I think you're getting mixed up, but you're only a beta, so I suppose that's expected. Last I heard it was Levander whose mutts were the fighting dogs. How many was it? A few hundred of them you lost

ay the battle of Hellavator.”

The beta takes a step out further into the light in front of the alpha whose eyes seem to be darting between Felix and Jinnie, probably waiting to see if the two will try to kill each other, which at this point is better.

“You’re an awful cocky little omega. Sure you won the battle, but have you forgotten that we’ve won the war? You’re little friends? You’re alpha? Do you know their heads are on display in the courtyard? So what does that make you?” Jinnie sneered at him, like he was a fly he wanted to squash.

Felix could feel a rush of emotions rise up in him, but he pushed it down, knowing he couldn’t give in to the beta’s taunting. There would be time for grieving and thinking later, but right now he had to keep it together.

“You won.” The words tasted bitter in Felix’s mouth. “Congratulations on being responsible for the deaths of thousands. The blood of mothers, fathers and pups is on your hands. You’re King’s hands, you’re alphas hands. But I’m still alive and I know what you’ve done. What your kingdom has done.”

The beta was in front of Felix before he even realised it inches away from his face.

“That King.” Jinnie growls into Felix’s face. “That alpha is my mate. He’s your mate and as his mate. I would advise you to speak very carefully.”

“Hyunjin.” The voice of the silver-tongued alpha calls out to him.

Felix has to bite back a growl of his own and looks up into the angry blue eyes. “How unlucky I am. Of all the idiots I could have for mates. I get stuck with you lot.”

The words were lethal and venomous and the beta’s eyes became so dark, they were almost black and Felix could feel the edge of the smile on his face.

“You put on quite the show, little one. But be that as it may, we’re stuck with you too, Felix or is Yongbok?” The words come from behind the blonde-haired beta.

The beta moves away from Felix and he can seem the alpha looking unbothered by the bookshelves, looking at his nails before he looks up at Felix.

Felix says nothing.

“Fine. We’ll stick with Felix for now.” The alpha includes. “As fun as it would be watching you two kill each other. Some of us have things to do. So here’s what’s going to happen.”

Minho stepped closer to Felix as Hyunjin stepped further away from him, still looking like he wanted to throttle Felix.

“Regardless of how we feel towards each other. You are our mate, the King and the alpha’s mate. Unfortunately for all of us, we can’t do anything about that. So you’re going to be staying in the private apartments.

“You have open access to it, except the packrooms and individual bedrooms. Myself or Hyunjin will be here at one point to keep an eye on you. You won’t be allowed to leave the private apartments unless we allow it. Guards are outside all the doors, so I wouldn’t try anything if I was you.”

Felix stared at him as if he had grown two heads and he swore he would hear the beta laughing in the background.

“That’s your grand plan? Lock me up in the place where you sleep?” Felix questioned in disbelief.

“You’re one of the royal omegas now, regardless of what anyone says or wants. But that means nothing to us. You’re an enemy Felix, and you’re dangerous and make no mistake if you ever try to hurt any of my mates. I’ll make you regret ever being born, so for now you’ll stay here.” The alpha’s voice cuts through Felix like steel cutting through flesh and he almost shivers.

“You should be thankful really, you would be on the wall with your friends if you hadn’t looked at me.” Hyunjin adds smirking at him.

Felix clenches his fists. “I’d rather be in the dungeon.”

Minho crossed his arms over his chest. “Believe me we would all rather that, but too many people already know what you are. Locking you in the dungeon wouldn’t leave the best impression.”

Felix almost snorts “And telling people that you have another mate who is an enemy is better?”

Minho smiles a catlike smile. “You let us worry about that, little omega. For now just settle in and try not to cause too much trouble.

“The physician will be along soon with some of the guards. They’ll get rid of those and check you over and show you your room for the time being.”

Why would these stupid wolves need a physician? He wasn’t injured, apart from bruises and aches he was fine.

He stops suddenly, where are they planning on doing something to him?

“I’m not injured.”

“It seems to be the case. However you’re skinny, too skinny and who knows what sort of diseases you could have picked up.” Hyunjin added from where he stood and Felix snarled at him.

“You’ll cooperate with him.” Minho ordered. “If not. I’m more than happy to hold you down.”

Much like Minho said, the physician did come minutes after Minho finished talking with two guards. Minho led them to a single room towards the back of the apartments, initially Felix was expecting something tiny with bars on the window, but it was in fact the opposite.

The room was bigger than what the entire house had been and part enraged Felix that these royal mutts were

living in palaces so big when others had been starving.

He didn't get much time to explore, before he was led to sit on the bed and the guards were eyeing him cautiously as the cuffs from his wrists were removed. He was debating trying something, but Minhø was leaning against the doorframe speaking with the physician and eyed him as he spoke.

Afterwards the door closed and it was him and the guards and the physician who were standing in front of him. "Let's get this over with hmm?"

"How did it go?" The voice of the alpha said as Minhø strolled in and promptly planted himself next to where Hyunjin was sitting on the sofa.

"As well as expected." Minhø answered back to Changbin, before his gaze turned towards Hyunjin.

"It would help if this one could control his temper though. What did we say about antagonizing him?" Minhø asked Hyunjin, who was too busy fidgeting with his hands.

"Jinnie. We discussed this." The tired voice of Chan said from where he was sitting near the top of the table.

"I tried, okay? He's just so..." Jinnie trailed off unsure of what to say about the young omega that he had just encountered.

"Feisty." Minhø instead answered for him.

Chan looked from Minhø and then to Hyunjin, frowning slightly. "Jinnie, if you can't do this. You don't have to. Seungmin could h-

Hyunjin cut him off. "I can do it, hyung."

"Then stop letting him get under your skin. We knew he would be like this, but reacting to it is only making it worse. You saw how he was." Minhø tells Hyunjin in a surprisingly gentle way unlike Minhø.

"What is he like?" Seungmin asks, his head popping up from where he was sitting next to Innio on the floor.

"Stubborn, angry, vicious and a brat." Hyunjin grumbled all at once shifting on the sofa from where he went.

"Sounds like he really got under your skin." Hannio offered, looking up from where he was nestled in next to Chan at the table.

"What did the physician say?" Chan asks, pulling Hannio in tighter against his body in a almost protective manner.

"What we expected." Minhø replies, reaching out to squeeze Hyunjin's hand. "He's covered in bruises, underweight, a little dehydrated but apart from what, everything looks fine."

"You missed the part when he bit him three times." Hyunjin added "and almost had to be held down to be examined."

Changbin makes a weary sounding noise, shuffling on his seat, looking at Chan concerned.

"I really think we should have kept him in the dungeon. He's unpredictable and dangerous. What if he hurts someone?" He questions brows furrowed at their leader.

"We can't. There will talk. There already is, and if it hadn't been for Minnie's quick thinking of a cover story for him, they would already know. It's bad enough having to lie how we found him, but if anyone knew he was being kept in the dungeon, they would know it's a lie.

"We have to keep him near us. So everyone believes that he really was a spy sent to work for the Red Alpha by us. No one can ever find out who he really is." Chan replies back to Changbin.

"But eventually they'll want to see him." Innio's sentence hangs in the air for a few moments and a tense silence follows.

"We deal with one problem at a time with him. When the time comes for that, we will deal with it then." Minhø answers the youngest beta.

"Until then." Chan pauses to look at all of his mates. "We stick to the plan. Minhø and Hyunjin will be the ones keeping an eye on them. The rest of us have a kingdom to rebuild."

Six days pass. Six long agonising days of the same thing. Six days of staying inside his new plush prison.

At this rate, he'll go mad and then the King and his mates won't have to worry about what to do with him.

Six days since he's left the room. It's not because he's scared, it's more because he has no idea how to act or what to do if he runs into one of them, it's clear he hates them and they hate him so it seemed the most sensible idea to stay out of their way.

Strangely they seem to have been respecting that and no one had come near him. Every morning he woke to a knock on the door with a tray of food, which he picked at before returning it, with two more trays appearing at lunch and dinner.

Felix regrettable spent a lot of time sleeping, it was as if body was finally beginning to allow itself to rest after months of strain and injury, but when he wasn't he was planning. He had found some spare art supplies in one of his drawers and begun to try and work out some kind of floor plans, and then he had begun writing down everything he could remember about the royals.

He had explored every inch of the room, finding a collection of clothes, pjs and other necessary items. He was

annoyed that he enjoyed the bath and shower so much, but mostly he spent his time debating if he could jump from the bathroom window.

Even as a shifter if he attempted it, he could most likely die. It was probably the only reason why there weren't bars on the window, but he watched a lot. Learned what guards did what outside, what time they switched it and how many.

Felix could watch and wait, he was patient like that.

But after six days he truly was going to go mad if he didn't get out of the room. There was only so much for him to do.

On the seventh day, the knock of the door signified his breakfast. He was already dressed in some slacks and a white shirt, newly showered before he slowly slid off the bed and towards the door.

He opened it slowly, expecting to find a tray on the floor, but almost jumped when he met the vicious eyes of Minho.

The alpha was holding the tray in his hands, looking oddly out of place.

"Good you're up. You can come and eat this in the dining room." Minho told him, eyeing him up and down before stepping back.

Felix opens his mouth to refuse, but Minho beats him to it. "It isn't a question. Come one."

He half-debates, closing the door on the infuriating alpha, but when he smells the scent of another wolf, he second guesses himself. Hyunjin or one of the others could be lounging about for all he knew. Two against one doesn't bode well for him.

Minho turns and walks away and Felix has no choice but to follow him at a cautious distance down the hallway full of doors and into the main area with the library and pass that into a kitchen and then into a large dining area.

This place really was huge, he noted, thinking about adding it to his map.

"Sit." Minho nods to where he placed Felix's tray. "Eat."

Felix does sit begrudgingly as Minho sits across from him with his only plate of food which looks similar to what Felix has.

Minho picks up a fork and begins to eat, as Felix discreetly glances around for any sign of any of the others here.

"They're not here." Minho answers him. "Now eat."

Disgruntled at being told what to do he turns towards his food and takes a few spoonfuls of rice watching the alpha wearily from the side of his eye.

"Six days huh? Have we terrified you so much that you stay locked away?" The alpha asks as he reaches for his water.

"You don't scare me." Felix answers in between bites. "I just see no point in having to be around you more than I have to."

Minho chews blinking at the omega unmoving and unrelenting.

"Really? I need to work more on scaring you then I think." He thinks aloud as he scratches his chin.

Felix fights the urge to growl at the alpha. He hates him, at least with the other one, Hyunjin he knew where he stood, but Minho with his oddly strange words was baffling to Felix, and he couldn't seem to figure it out.

"Go for it." He mutters under his breath unbothered by his remarks.

He had seen alphas. Alphas who had scared him so bad he wanted to kneel to them. Minho had nothing on them so far. The only real one of his so-called mates that had scared him was the King, not his little underlining alpha.

After a few bites Felix begins to feel pull and starts playing with it with his spoon, he was still struggling with this much food.

"Don't you like it?" Minho questions where he's eating. "You have the King's own chief making your food yet you only eat a few bites of it."

"Not hungry." He answers giving the alpha the absolute bare minimum, he has no desire to continue speaking to him.

"Not good enough." Minho replies back quickly. "You're underweight. You need to be eating more to gain weight, you heard what the physician said."

Felix bares his teeth at the reminder of the annoying and unnecessary examination he had been forced to undergo.

"I'm fine, not that it's any business."

Minho put his cutlery down quietly before looking at Felix. "No more trays. You eat here. One of us has to watch what you're eating. Is that your plan? To starve?"

Felix snorts at this idiot of an alpha. "I don't have to tell you anything."

Minho tilts his head at Felix. "You don't. It would make everyone's life easier if you did."

Felix almost shakes his head at the audacity of him. Was he forgetting what he had done? What they had done and they just expected him to play nice?

"I'm not going to make your life any easier. I think it's easy enough." Felix concludes as he stands from his seat.

In a way he hopes Minho will try and stop him, he really wants to throw him across the table.

"Bit of advice you might want to remember. We always get what we want. Always." Minho says offhandedly as

he picks up his fork. "I would recommend taking a book before you go back to your room. I can't imagine you have much to do."

Felix does grab a few books on the way back. Six of them to be exact. The top one he throws towards Minh's head before he strolls back down the hall and into his room closing it with a loud bang.

Chapter 4 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/134447038>) : the escape

Summary:

Here we go! This is a good one!

Much to Felix's chagrin Minh sticks to his word and Felix annoyingly finds himself having to now eat his meal with the alpha. Most of the time they sit in silence, sometimes Minh tries to instigate a conversation of some sort but those rare times end with Felix often snarling at him.

Two days pass, then four, then nine and suddenly it's been an entire month.

A month of isolation, books and meals. It's strange how time passes so painfully slowly but also fast.

He still remembers the battle as if it was yesterday, he still remembers the surrender too. He dreams of it often, waking up covered in sweat inside his cage.

But although the month had felt endless, he had finally collected everything he needed. He had always been patient, a virtue thankfully that had served him well, he had all he needed now to finally try to escape from the castle.

He had the bare bones, but it was enough. He had watched the guards change shifts every few hours from his bathroom window. He had begun to identify that members of the pack did come back to the apartment but their rooms were at the end of the huge hallway.

Sometimes early in the morning he would wake and listen to try and overhear their conversation. They all seemed to tip-toe around his very existence, apart from Minh. He had been the really the only one in contact with Felix, not that Felix cared.

From watching and listening to everything, he knew the time the pack usually left, when they returned and where they were. He knew that outside the apartment doors there was a short period of time when the guards changed shifts, he only really had two minutes to make it out of that hallway unseen.

Once Minh left the apartment this morning, he would finally have a chance. He had timed it all, he had the clothing that would least likely to draw attention to himself laid out, he planned to try and swipe a knife from the cutlery and use it to cut his hair and as a potential weapon.

Felix was prepared as he would ever be.

He sat and endured his awkward dinner with the sharp-eyed eagle, playing mostly with his food, ignoring the alpha's attempts to trick him into a conversation, soon afterwards he returned to his room and waited until the footsteps of the alpha to disappear, then he bolts out the room with the few possessions he has.

He only really has one chance for this.

He makes it back out into the main area and passed the table with no problems, before he made it to the front door.

Remember the plan: the words of his alpha play in his head as he leans his head against the wooden doors, waiting for the shift change.

He pulls his hood up over his head and waits a few minutes before he hears the footsteps disappear and then he disappears.

"How was he this morning?" Han questions Minh as he enters the bedroom with a stoic expression.

"The usual." He grumbled. "That little brat will be the death of me."

Minh eyes Hyunjin and Seungmin on the sofa, and moves towards them half-collapsing on them as they let out several groans and attempt to push him off.

"You know if it's annoying you. I can take a swing at him." Hyunjin offered as he successfully managed to shove Minh off him and onto the spare seat next to Seungmin.

Minh eyed the alpha suspiciously "You'd like that wouldn't you? Sadly I don't think he would play with you."

Hyunjin rolled his eyes with a glint. "You never know."

"Jinnie, you know you can play with me anytime." Hannie called from where he was sitting snacking, barely paying attention.

Hyunjin snickered, which earned him a swift elbow from the alpha, currently once again half-draped over him.

"Maybe one of us should give it a try." Seungmin shrugs looking at the alpha.

Minh's eyes flash dangerously and playfully "Are you doubting my capabilities, Kim Seungmin?"

He holds his hands up in a mock sense of surrender "Of course not hyung, just perhaps a different approach is needed."

"I'll say. Let's just put him in the dungeon and be done with it. I don't know why you keep trying." Hyunjin tells him, sounding exasperated with the full ordeal.

Han straightens and frowns at the words of the other alpha.

"Because he's our mate. Admit it Jinnie, even you can feel a pull towards him. We can't just ignore him." He tells Hyunjin, looking slightly put out at the thought of locking Felix away.

"But how long do we keep doing this? From the sounds of nothing has changed. We're not really getting anywhere." Seungmin adds looking from Hannie and then to Minh.

The answer he got was silence. It had been the question that all of them had been thinking, days and days of nothing wasn't going down well.

People were beginning to talk, they were aware of Felix's existence now, it was only a matter of time before it became public knowledge but almost everyone in the castle and the staff now knew about him.

It was part of the reason he had to move into the royal apartments, and soon questions would be asked about where he had come from and how they had found them. A subject which all of them were dreading to talk about.

"Who knows?" Minh sighs as he moves to wrap an arm around Hyunjin, tugging him forward into him.

Hyunjin moans and tries to push him off, which if anything makes Minh tighten his grip around the beta as he reaches in to scent the younger.

"Part of me still can't believe it's really him." Seungmin says as he crosses his legs and settles down further into the softness of the sofa.

Han nods in agreement, looking between all three of his mates. "Me either."

"I don't think any of us do." Hyunjin adds as he annoyingly moves closer to Minh to pull him further into him with a satisfied smirk at the weakening resolve of the beta. Rarely does anyone win against Minh.

Hannie plays with his fingers nervously as he looks to Minh and then to Seungmin with silent anxiety plastered on his face "Will Chan-hyung and Changbin-hyung really accept him?"

The omega had spent every waking moment either worrying about the situation or begging the others to let him meet him.

Apart from the moment in the main hall when they had first seen each other for only a few minutes, Seungmin, Inn and Hannie had been told to stay away from the other omega until they all knew exactly what they were dealing with.

Changbin had made a point of staying as far away as possible, leaving before the omega woke and returning in the later hours.

Chan was heavily protective of all his mates so the thought of Felix being so close to his mates was making him uncomfortable, especially given his history with the rebels and the Red Alpha.

Him along with Chan were probably the two most struggling with it, which was why he had happily taken up Minh's offer to keep an eye on Felix while they he got on with trying to get the country back on track.

"They don't have much of a choice." Minh answers looking from Hyunjin to Seungmin and then finally Hannie, his eyes softening lightly.

"Of course he does. He's the King." Seungmin scuffs at the idea of not having a choice.

Seungmin, much like Inn and Hyunjin, had mixed feelings towards the idea of a new mate, and one from the Red Country at that.

He had been one of the first to tell them to just ignore the bond and to let Felix hang, but it had been said more out of anger. He had seen the years of damage the Red War had had on the county, on his mates and his family.

He was bitter and angry and the idea of a mate like Felix had in a sense made the unusually calm beta's blood boil.

"Remember he's an alpha too. He knows we'll never be complete until we have our 8th." Minh replies sounding unusually softer and more gentle than he usually is.

Hyunjin shifts lightly to turn around more and meets Hannie's eyes "Did Binnie manage to find anything else about him from our friends?"

Hannie looks despondent before he replies "Not much. They're not really talking."

The three that they had left alive in the dungeons had been practically useless from what he had heard from his hyungs. They barely managed to get a word out of them and in a sense Hannie admired their loyalty but they were getting nowhere.

They knew little to nothing about their new mate.

"Maybe it's my turn." A cold and giddy voice cuts across the room.

Hannie shivers involuntarily at the tone.

Everyone knew that the scariest and most lethal one of the seven was Minh. He was ruthless and demanding and often got what he wanted.

Sometimes he was scarier than Chan when he was saying something, because when Chan was angry. He was terrifying.

"We need them alive, hyung." Seungmin says, rolling his eyes at Minh's sharp tone.

“Do we really? I mean maybe one as a spare, but three? I think we’re being too generous with our terms.” Hyunjin wonders aloud looking from Seungmin to Minho in thought.

Three had seemed ideal. The rest had been hung and they had kept the three for intel and eventually be used for other purposes, but would the threat of death of one of their friends force information?

From what Hyunjin had heard, barely any of them prisoners that had been captured uttered a single word at all about their alpha or provided any real information about the Red Alpha and his plans.

“We need them. Chan-hyung said we need all the intel we can get and he’s right. We know almost nothing about him apart from his name and that he was working with the red alpha closely for years.” Hannie replies, sighing heavily.

“So we have nothing.” Hyunjin says deflating Minho further.

“Not entirely.”

All three of the wolves look in surprise to the eldest, all looking at him suddenly wide eyed and curious as to what he knew.

“He was starving and he’s covered in bruises. How sure are he really fighting for him?” Minho wondered, thinking back to what he had saw and what the physician had told him when he had examined Felix.

“They said he was.” Hannie answers frowning thinking back to what they said and remembered.

Felix had been captured in the middle of the fighting, he was one of the last ones rounded up before he was brought to the capital and they had told them his name so he had to have something to do with him.

The bruises could have come from the fighting and the starving, most of the soldiers when they had been brought had been malnourished and dehydrated, it hadn’t just been Felix.

Seungmin clicks his teeth in frustration. “All we have is more questions than answers.”

They all knew it was the truth and they didn’t like it. No one liked it. Especially that they knew nothing and were getting nowhere, and Felix’s resistance and lack of interest in anything was getting them nowhere.

He simply refused to interact with Minho. They seemed to constantly be going round in circles. It was frustrating for them all, but probably for Minho the most who interacted with him almost every day to not even get more than two words out of the omega.

“I want to see him.” Hannie says with a new found resolve.

Maybe it had been omega instincts but he felt a pull towards Felix, probably one of the only ones that did, but he felt he needed to be Felix and not being able to see him was unsettling him knowing he was so close yet so far in a sense.

Hyunjin looks like he’s about to answer, but then the door opens so fast and loud and everyone jumps and all four of them are on their feet, waiting to see some kind of threat at the door, but instead all they see is Innie.

“Innie.” Hyunjin examines. “You almost gave us a heart attack. What are you doin-”

Innie leans against the door breathing heavily as if he’s trying to catch his breath.

“He’s gone.” He tells them with wide eyes. “Felix is gone.”

Escaping in a sense is almost easy for Felix. He slips through the cracks between the shift changes and before he knows it he’s out.

He does hesitate on where to go, half-wondering if he should try to find the dungeons, but he knows the place will be like a maze and he can’t really remember exactly where it is, so he ends up abandoning the idea fairly quickly and makes the decision to just try and find a way out or even hide.

Who knows how long he’ll actually have before he gets caught and what will happen if he gets caught, which at this point isn’t really much of an option, so he moves fairly fast and quiet as he ducks around corners, cursing at the size of the place. It was beyond annoying.

Eventually he finds his way outside, and he can actually feel the sun on his skin, for the first time in what seems like forever, but he has no time to do anything before he sprints across the grass and into what looks like a courtyard sort of area.

But all it is is walls. Large and high walls that he almost shakes looking at, he quickly turns back around and heads inside and runs face first into someone.

He quickly apologizes as he pulls himself up off the ground and looks to apologize when stops, his jaw momentarily failing open before he quickly regains composure.

“Going somewhere? So soon?” The voice of his mate mocks and Felix flees his legs moving without thinking in the opposite direction back into the courtyard before he even realises what he’s doing.

Every instinct in his body is screaming for him to get away, to get away from this alpha and seek some sort of safety.

He’s sure he can hear the alpha behind curse as footsteps promptly follow behind him, as Felix grits his teeth and forces himself to go faster, he closes his eyes and promptly shifts into a large white wolf, as he skids around the corner almost knocking a few staff of of their feet, with several jumping and failing to the side.

“Felix!” The voice yells, sounding further away than what he thought. “This is pointless. Stop now. Before you

hurt yourself or someone else for that matter.”

Felix ignores him and prances back into the courtyard where he was. There was still no exit, it was all walls.

He was boxed in and caught. He had to think fast. There was no way he could fight Changbin and there was no way he could jump the wall, his only option was a gap or some sort of weakness in the wall. That was his only escape.

Then he spots it. In the furthest away corner of the wall, boxes. Wooden boxes, stacked a few high. This was his chance.

He could jump, he wasn't entirely sure if he would make it but he would give it his best shot. The alternative was to stay here. He was hardly a big wolf, or strong, but he was fast.

Just as he was about to find the nerve to make it, he heard Changbin come borrowing around the corner, still in human form, looking almost out of breath.

“Felix.” He looked furious. “What the hell are you doing? Get back here before I drag you.”

Felix's eyes darkened at that and he growled loudly and turned away from him and eyed the wall quickly trying to work it out, would he actually even make it over?

This was his only chance and if he failed, he would end up flat on his back dead probably.

“Don't do anything stupid.” Changbin's voice was pleading, almost desperate.

Felix almost felt smug about the way the alpha was pleading for him, not long ago he was smug and arrogant towards him. How things had changed, they really did need him.

A loud grunting growl made his head turn and one look at the large black wolf that now stood next to Changbin was all Felix needed to hear and he was sprinting as fast as he could towards the boxes.

A loud howl followed and the pounding of footsteps, but he didn't look back instead pouncing on the first box, wincing as he felt the wood almost slam through his paw. He made it onto the second one, his paws narrowly on the edge before he slipped, scrambling to hold on.

He pulled and was exhausted until he was on the second box. Chan, the alpha was below him, making his way up behind him.

Somehow it spurred him on and he launched himself up from the side of the wall.

“Felix!”

Chapter 5 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/135056587>): memories

Notes:

(See the end of the chapter for [notes \(#chapter_5_endnotes\)](#).)

By sheer luck he landed panting heavily, his paws shredded, and he still had to jump from the large wall, and there didn't seem to be much to cushion his fall.

His panic increased tenfold when the black wolf also managed to land on the wall next to him, making it look as it was easy, looking totally unbothered.

Their eyes met.

Do it. The wolf's eyes almost bore into him as saying.

Felix gulped looking from him to the ground which seemed very far down from him. Would he die from the fall?

He looked out from the top and down and suddenly he froze. His body is almost not working.

Further down from the castle, were heads.

Heads on a spike. His friends' heads, scattered on wooden poles around the long winding path towards the case. They had killed them.

Murdered them.

It was at that point Felix felt a new wicked rage grow and root itself inside him. The angriest he had ever been and instead of jumping, he moves towards the wolf in front of him.

This alpha was meant to be his mate, he was meant to protect him and yet all he had done was hurt him.

He locked him up, killed his friends and now here he was.

Chan took the hit to the side surprised, but didn't wobble or seem affected at all, had Felix really grown that weak under the Red Alpha. Had he really grown as pathetic as his alpha thought he had?

Was he worthless?

Chan bared his teeth at Felix in warning almost but held his ground, but Felix ran at him again hard, battering into his side and at this point, Chan snapped and shoved him back, Felix's paws slowly slipping against the rocky surface.

He had barely even touched the alpha, he must have grown weak.

Felix growled loudly and met the alpha's eyes. He refused to submit to him, submit to someone who hated him, who murdered people, who started wars.

Why was he so unlucky? Maybe he should just jump.

Consequences be damned at this point.

Chan must have been watching him assessing him because the second he moved towards the wall, he felt the force of the wolf on him. Almost trying to move him further away from the wall and towards the middle of it.

Felix fought hard, he stretched and pawed and pushed, but he was strong, stupidly strong, but Felix managed to struggle away from him, but his foot slipped and then he was on his stomach, a dangerous position to be for a wolf.

Chan was over him before he knew it, towering over him. Felix tried to twirl around, snapping his teeth at him, but he lost the minute Chan's teeth sunk into his neck. His furry body low, hanging above Felix as he held him.

Felix to his embarrassment let out a whine and as hard as he tried, he couldn't escape him, he felt like all he was doing was making the hurt more.

He had bit him. Worse than that. He had marked him. He would never escape him now or then. He was stuck.

Enough. Chan's voice echoed through his head as he finally released his hold on Felix's neck, but kept a light grip, a scuff almost.

He tried to shake off the voice in his head, but he pushed it down and swallowed and tried to get away from him, suddenly very scared.

This was not the plan. This was bad. So bad. If the Alpha found out...then he really would throw Felix to the rogues. Let them rip him to shreds.

This was worse than dying and now he was stuck, the grip Chan had on him was solid, his only option was to give in, to submit to him.

He lets his body go limp, almost all the adrenaline leaving his body as he did as he tried to catch his breath.

Chan, seeing there was probably no likelihood of anything happening, released Felix whose head almost hit the brick when he did, suddenly all energy seemed gone from him.

It's okay. Just breathe. Felix manages to send him a sharp look.

Get out of my head. He hisses at him angrily.

You know it doesn't work like that. Chan offers in reply looking at the panting white wolf before him.

He shakily took to his paws glancing wearily at Chan who remained by his side watching him closely.

Can you make it back down? He questions looking at the boxes that Felix jumped up from.

He ignored him and eyed the boxes, before looking over at the wall longingly, at which point Chan rumbled and looked at the boxes.

It didn't matter now. Escaping was useless. He would be useless to the cause, he could do nothing to help them now.

His life is over now. The minute Chan sunk his teeth into his neck, it was over.

He had bitten him. Marked him as one of his mates. Chan was his mate...and so were the others.

The very people who detested him and he detested. He would spend the rest of his life in a cage now.

Chan nudged him forward and he went, almost feeling defeated slowly, his paws aching from the wood. He eyes the wooden boxes.

Take your time. It should be easier. Changbin added more boxes. The voice told him.

He jumped to the first one, his paws aching and protesting as he landed with a thump.

He could see Changbin pacing below with another few of his mates, all with worried looking expressions on their faces.

He jumped down onto the second box, hissing at the pain in his paw. Behind him he could hear Chan following him down.

Then he moved down to the newest box, bracing himself as his paws hit the wood. He yelped as he slipped, his paw losing grip on it.

Immediately Chan was next to him, trying to grab at him or paw at him to stabilize him, but Felix paws were in a bad way, the pain was awful and it was only at this point, he realised the blood dripping from them.

He braced himself, to try and hold on, but in a sense he couldn't keep telling and his back end was hanging off the box, with Chan trying to hold him in a way.

He could hear paws coming up behind him, but Felix was tired and hurting and as his paws became weaker, his grip loosened and not even Chan could support his weight as Felix tumbled down to the ground.

The roars were the last thing he heard.

"Stop. Felix, think and focus." The voice tells him waking him up abruptly from whatever place he was in.

He opened his eyes and found himself back in the woods, in the woods he had grown up in for most of his life.

Felix divides his life into several parts, the before, the then and after. The previous was the only time in his life Felix would ever admit that he was truly happy.

It was when his family was still alive. He was born as a normal pup, with a big family, outside of a pack due to the war, which was nearing a boiling point. He had grandparents, sisters and parents,

He remembers warm hugs and the smell of marshmallows. He remembers chasing his younger and older sister around in the woods, he can remember the smell of his mother; lavenders.

But mostly he remembers the day it changed, the day that they all got caught in the crossfire of a violent war.

How the wolves came, how they slaughtered his entire family, and by some miracle only him and his elder sister

died, how they clung to survival and hid in the woods until a stray wolf found them and took them to the red alphas pack.

They are just another two pups cut in the crossfire of a war that started before they were even born. A war that no one even seemed sure of who started it.

“Are you even listening to me?” His sister asks again as she lightly taps his shoulder. “You’re doing it wrong and then you’ll get into trouble.”

Felix rolled his eyes and shoved her affectionately. “I’m trying. It just doesn’t come naturally to me.”

Rachel moves behind him and begins moving his arms and shoulders into an almost stronger position than they were previously.

“There. Straight and tall and breath slowly and strike.”

Felix followed her words and did as she said and slowly he managed to transform into the white wolf that he had been trying to do for over twenty minutes.

He hated to admit that Rachel was right, but everything somehow came easily to her.

Transforming was easy, but not for Felix, he was constantly trying to train and manage it better, and was constantly getting scolded.

His sister kneels down with a smile on her face and Felix lets out a light noise in frustration over how easy she had managed to show him how to do it.

No wonder he was teased by the others, when something this easy shouldn’t even be hard for a wolf.

“It’s okay, you know? You’ll get there. It’s all just training.” Rachel says, reaching out to pat his fur.

Training. The never ending training to fight, to learn, it was constant. His life sometimes felt like all it was for was preparing for battle. But out here away from the city in the wilderness that’s all there was.

The red alpha was the biggest pack and the only pack that could offer some kind of protection, many of the smaller packs had disappeared during the war, much like Felix’s family. There was a reason the number of wolves was slowly declining, the attacks from the King’s family had been increasing lately, with the last raid, one of the houses closer to the city had led to hundreds of casualties on either side.

Yet there was no sign of a ceasefire in sight. All it seemed to do was make people angrier than anything else, the crown was determined to wipe them out.

“We should get going, dinner will be soon and I don’t want to be stuck with soup again.” Rachel moaned looking at Felix. “Can you change back?”

Felix could. Thankfully that was something he could do. He closed his eyes and pictured his human body and felt his bones beginning to snap and crack back in place.

Rachel threw his clothes at him with her back turned as she waited for him to get re-dressed. Felix used to get embarrassed, but nakedness was something as a wolf you just had to get used to, but it was different with a blood family.

“Will we meet after training tomorrow?” Felix asked as he pulled back on his clothes as fast as he could to avoid the blistering cold.

“As soon as I’m finished with my rounds I’ll head out. Are we meeting at the usual place?” Rachel asks from where she was sitting.

“Ye, I’ll get some flowers when I’m out on patrol tomorrow.” Felix says as he pulls on his shirt and walks towards where Rachel is sitting.

She sighs as he places a hand on her shoulder. “It’s hard to believe it’s been so long now.”

Felix nods in agreement. “And nothing has changed.”

Rachel turns to him. “Change will come Felix. It has to come for all of us. We can’t live like this forever.”

The world changes then, and just like that he’s gone from the woods and his sister is once again ripped from him.

He opens his eyes and he’s in pain. Everything hurts and he’s in a room he doesn’t recognise. He can smell scents of other wolves he doesn’t know. He’s in a bed with blankets and he panics.

Felix tries to sit up, but fails with the pain shooting through his body, and suddenly he remembers. He fell, he fell from pretty high up and he’s still alive?

“Stop.” A voice says, catching his attention as hands flail out in front of him, trying to push him back down to hold him down.

Felix pushes harder ignoring the pain.

“Felix, please. You’re going to make it worse. They can give you something for the pain I promise. I’ll call the physician right now. Please calm down.” An unfamiliar voice says as if he’s trying to soothe him.

“I promise you’re okay.”

It’s at that point Felix meets eyes with another omega.

Notes:

Here we go everyone! :) Enjoy and have a great week.

Chapter 6 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/136054438>): the aftermath

Notes:

Warning of a lot of angst in this chapter. But please enjoy.

"It's okay." The omega tells him as Felix slowly breathes in trying to calm himself down.

He looks at the omega. He's young and dark haired, and then it hits him.

Felix fights against the urge to scramble away from him. He's number two. His second mate in a sense.

Han Jisung. The first mate of the King's. Not much was known about him, apart from the pact that he was an omega, and was the first mate that the King found out of the seven. Or eight now.

He had been the only omega up of the pack...up until now that was.

Han Jisung isn't exactly isn't what he's expecting, from what he had seen of the pack, they were strong, cold and aggressive almost, but this omega, if anything he seemed unbelievably soft.

Why on earth had they left Felix with him?

The omega's eyes are wide and then Felix focuses, he needs to take account of his injuries. He lifts his arms and almost vomits.

The large white cast on his arm says it all. He had injured his front paw when he had fallen, broken it probably from the fall.

This was not good.

Slowly he checked his legs, and to his surprise no injuries, just a bit of stiffness, and his hands slowly worked his way up and to his surprise, he felt the white bandage around his head. Had he fallen and hurt it as well?

His hand travelled from his bandaged head and down towards his neck and he automatically hissed when his hand pressed against his neck and then he froze, his eyes shooting to the worried looking omega across from him.

"He bit me." Felix states fury taking over his body and slowly building, he can almost feel the fire in his eyes.

The omega looks nervous suddenly as if he thought that wouldn't come up. He says nothing looking down at his lap.

"He bit me." Felix says again emphasizing his fury.

He had let that alpha close enough to bite him. He would control him now and he was stuck with them, all of them. Seven of them.

With the enemy...

"No." Felix says, shaking his head in denial. "How could he?"

"He had no choice." says the omega finally finding his voice looking now at Felix. "You would have killed yourself jumping off that wall."

"You should have let me. After what you've done. After everything you and your mates have done? It wasn't enough was it? He had to take it didn't he? The other thing he didn't have?" Felix spat furiously trying to sit up from where he was lying.

"You're going to hurt yourself!" Han proclaims standing from where he's sitting and moving towards the flailing Felix.

"Don't even think of laying a hand on me, you filthy murderer." Felix spits out at him as the other omega physically reels back after if the words hurt him.

"Felix...it's not...whatever it is, we can talk about it. All of us together." Han pleads his hands in the air in mock surrender.

Felix somehow manages to get out of the bed, maybe he's running on pure rage, but right now he's chaotic and angry and all he wants to do is rip the omega apart.

His instincts are all over the place due to the new bite, the mating bite. His wolf is screaming at him for being so horrible to one of his mates.

Mates. He almost hunches over and vomits at the word.

He was their mate. He manages to balance himself on shaky legs against the dresser, trying not to be overwhelmed by everything.

"You want to talk? There's nothing to say. You took my life." He almost yells at the tentative omega.

"Was it not enough for you or your alphas? You already had me. But this? Too do this?" Felix rages glaring towards him.

"We didn't want it to happen like this. Really we didn't. We wanted to give you time to try and come around to the idea. We wanted to work together with you." Han offers up in a way trying to explain his action to him.

"You think killing the people I thought alongside you would make me want to be your mate? How deluded are

you? We surrendered to you, yet they're dead. You think I didn't see what you did? What your mates did. I saw their heads on a spike." Felix rages slowly and unsteadily moving towards Han.

The omega pales, but refuses to falter. "No one wanted it to come to that, but they were given a choice."

"What sort of choice was it? Talk or die?" Felix questions moving closer, and he has a small sense of satisfaction as the omega moves slightly backwards.

"You should have killed me. You have no idea what you've done." He vows to him as he walks closer until he's in front of him.

"You're our mate. My mate, none of us can kill each other regardless of how much we want to." Han answers straight back looking at Felix.

Felix stares right through him for a second before he turns back breathing heavily as he reaches for the dresser to support himself as he fights the urge to sob. Sob at the reality, and the anger that he feels.

How could this be real?

How on earth was this happening?

Where was his alpha when he promised to protect him from this? From them? He said if he stuck to the plan, the others would be safe, that he would be safe, but this. He should have died. This couldn't be his reality.

"Felix." Han tries moving slightly closer as Felix clenched his fist against the dresser.

Blind with rage he reaches the closest thing he can and finds a silver candlestick and lobs it behind him in anger, wanting the omega to back off.

It clatters to the floor and Felix turns to hear a growl, a loud feral growl and then he's pushed against the drawer, a hand around his throat.

"Bin." Han calls from his position behind him moving towards where he has Felix pinned against the wall. "I'm fine, let him go."

Felix tilts his head at the alpha. He had been wondering when he would make an appearance, he had heard him nearby for the door for a while now observing and listening to the conversation.

"You're him right?" Felix squeezes the words out through his throat. "The alpha soldier from the Seo clan. The one who gave up his own pack to be the King's whore."

Felix could hear a pin drop and then Han's sharp intake in the room. The tension was red hot and Felix wondered if he would do it, if he really would choke him and stop it.

But instead Changbin just smirks predatorily. "Little omega you have no idea who you're dealing with. So I would stop right now if I was you."

Felix pushed against his grip with all his energy, but annoyingly he wasn't quite as strong as the toned alpha.

"Really?" Felix says, raising an eyebrow. "I think I do. You think I don't know who you are? Who all of you are? What you've done?"

Changbin tilts his head slightly staring back at him. "I could say the same thing to you, little traitor."

Felix smirks and a small painful chuckle escapes his throat and lowers his voice. "How many wolves have you killed, Seo Changbin?"

"How many of your own kind did you slaughter because you're mate and King told you too? How many pups and families died because of you? Defenseless wolves who were innocent."

He felt the hand at his throat tighten and Felix coughed at the sudden pressure.

"Binnie, don't hurt him!" Han called, moving swiftly towards him and reaching for Changbin.

Changbin's hard eyes stared at Felix and finally he released his hold on his throat and he coughed as air came back into his lungs and the alpha took a few steps back away from him reaching for Han, pulling the omega to him.

"Since you seem to be fine. We're leaving since some of us have work to do, but don't worry we'll be sure to let Chan-hyung know you're awake. He's been waiting to speak to you." Changbin tells him before he leaves taking Han with him, who looks like he wants to complain.

Changbin leads Han into the pack room, where they find Seungmin lounging on the bed with what looks like some sort of history book propped on his knees.

He's been the calmest of them all since Felix's escape and Chan's declaring of Felix as a mate.

He's always been like that though, cool and collected, never one to panic in a situation, he tended to the practical voice when all his mates tended to get over heated.

Almost everyone was still furious with Chan with what he had done, but not Seungmin, instead he had stuck by his alpha and looked at the others with a sort of contempt before concluding the situation perfectly.

"It would have happened eventually right?" He had said before allowing Chan to begrudgingly pull him into his lap and scent him.

There was no point in him being angry, but the others weren't quite seeing it that way.

"You should have left him alone." Seungmin tells them both, not looking away from his book.

Han moves away from him and crawls onto the huge bed, finding a spot and getting comfortable before beckoning Changbin to join him, which he did so.

He puts himself in the middle and wraps an arm around Han pulling him closer, before slinging an arm around Seungmin.

"We couldn't. He's alone and scared." Han replies snuggling up to Changbin a bit more, trying to not let the anxiety he was radiating off him show.

Seungmin lowers his books and looks at him. "And how did that go?"

Han looks away biting his lip. He shouldn't have expected it to be a normal conversation with Felix, but he really hadn't expected as much viciousness and anger from him, the other omega was full to the brim of it.

Would it really be possible for him to ever want to be their mate?

Changbin tightened his arm around Han and flicked Seungmin in the nose who spluttered and put down his book turning to the other alpha frowning.

"He was trying to help, since no one else seems to have any idea what to do." Changbin says, defending the fidgety omega in his arms.

Seungmin's face softens when he looks at Han. "I know you were, but he's not just going to accept us now because he has too."

Han sighs loudly. "What a mess. We've waited so long for him and well it's a disaster. What are we going to do?"

"Nothing. We can only hope that eventually his anger calms or we're all going to be in for a long and brutal life together." Seungmin replies as ever without a filter.

"Chan...I know it might have come to this...but his timing really.." Changbin trailed off, shaking his head thinking back to him and Felix.

"Felix was going to jump. He really had no choice. No one wants him to die, regardless of how much we hate his past. Even I feel a sort of need to protect him, it's not ideal." Han says "A part of him must feel the same."

"I'm not so sure. You saw how he was with you. You saw how he was with me." Changin replies, thinking back to the little omega.

"Have you seen you?" Seungmin questions eyes raised at Changbin "You probably terrified the poor boy."

"I'm not that scary." Changbin huffs defensively as he pulls Hannie a bit closer to him.

Han looks at him from where's currently squashed again "You were hyung."

"Can you blame me? Considering what he was saying about you?" Changbin asks, looking down at the younger omega.

Seungmin raises an eyebrow "What was he saying?"

"He saw the other soldiers and said we should have let him die, he may also have called Binnie a whore." Han says slightly quieter now, turning to look at his other mate.

A strange fire appeared unexpectedly in Seungmin's eyes "A whore?"

Changbin rolled his eyes and met Seungmin's "That's the part you're interested in?"

"It's just...the Seo clan is so respected, just where could he have heard that kind of thing?" Seungmin says frowning, thinking aloud at what Han had told him.

Changbin just waves it off, as if it doesn't bother him at all. "Who knows the lies he's been told."

Seungmin says and pinches his nose in exasperation, watching Changbin.

He knew at times the alpha could be sensitive about how he came about to join Chan and them, and how it still remained a bit of a touchy point at times. Most people knew of the story.

Changbin was a young alpha when he had come to work as one of the soldiers in the palace. He was strong and worked hard and worked his way up the ranks, he was sent to the battle field and on his return he met Chan, a few years after Chan had met Han, Seungmin, Hyunjin and Innie.

Changbin was a Seo and an alpha in his own right. He had expectations of him to eventually start his own pack, but when he had found Chan as his mate, his full world had turned upside down, it took a lot of convincing for him to even consider Chan and the others, even years later his family still remains hesitant of the issue.

But to call him a whore?

Changbin was well respected for his years fighting and worked closely with Chan on most things, he was a crucial part of them winning the war.

"I wonder what else he's been told about us, about what they were told about us." says Han breaking Seungmin's train of thought.

"That we're monsters." Changbin answers without even hesitating.

"Well we are aren't we? We've killed his people, and then his friends, and now Chan's done this?" Han concludes, sighing loudly.

Chapter 7 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/139600300>): the one who holds the power

Notes:

(See the end of the chapter for [notes \(#chapter 7 endnotes\)](#).)

It was frustrating for all eight of them, all eight of them were now joined in some sort of bond that seemed to be allowing them to react differently to each other's feelings, meaning that tempers were beginning to become shorter.

Changbin remained hauled up in the pack room with Seungmin and Han filled with anger at Chan, Felix and the full situation that they had been forced into.

Chan, who had locked himself in the office at first, was eventually interrupted by Minho, followed by Innie and an absolutely livid Hyunjin.

"How could you?" Hyunjin had been ranting for the last twenty minutes over Chan's sheer stupidity.

"I mean, you weren't thinking, but this hyung? What are we going to do now? The servants are whispering about some sort of attack on us because they think our new mate is some sort of spy!" Hyunjin continues as he paces up and down the floor of the office.

"Well they're not exactly far off are they?" Innie added unhelpfully from where he was lounging in an almost leisurely manner, but his eyes were wide and sharp with something new, something unknown.

Chan looks defeated in a way, he had taken a telling off from most of his mates. Changbin was unable to even look at him, Hyunjin was spitting fire, Innie remained cool, but underneath the surface was unnerved.

Minho, Seungmin and Han had remained the most level-headed of them all, even though Hannie had taken a bit of abuse from their newest omega earlier.

"Did you even use your brain for one second to think about us? The situation was bad enough with the rat, but now? Now what will everyone think?" Hyunjin adds, close to shifting himself from the sheer anger radiating from him.

Minho watches carefully from where he's leaning against the wall. He's waiting for Chan to say something and part of him hopes Jinnie calms down. Chan clearly knows what he's done, and he's taking hit after hit from their mates, but even he has a limit.

"What type of King are you?"

The words echo around the room, like a drum and Minho straightens a little further as he watches Hyunjin.

The room is tense now, even Inne sits up a bit, and darts nervously around the three others in the room, as the youngest alpha, he's the most inexperienced and occasionally gets nervous when the others fight, not that they ever really fight.

Hyunjin is the one who continues to surprise Minho the most, if anything it was Changbin he expected the fury from, probably part of the reason why he's with Han and Seungmin, deliberately staying away from Chan at the moment.

When the beta had first joined the pack, both him and Hannie had been at odds with each other for months, it had gotten so bad Chan had to intervene a few times and at one point the two made the decision to ignore each other.

The beta and omega's had changed around a year old, with Hannie's temper finally calming and Hyunjin becoming a lot less likely to annoy and antagonize their only omega.

Since then, Hyunjin was rarely the one to start anything, even the occasional bickering that happened often, with seven of them, disagreements were common, but communication between them all was key to stopping issues like arguments developing.

"Jinnie." Minho warned, knowing that Chan's patience would soon snap.

Regardless of Hyunjin being Chan's mate, he was also his alpha and his alpha would only take so much disrespect until he finally snapped.

"Calm down, Jinnie. I'm sure Chan-hyung has a plan." Innie adds trying to diffuse the already tense situation.

Hyunjin hisses at Innie, which makes him immediately recall and Minho moves ready to scruff him if needed.

He was out of line.

"A plan? What plan could that be? We're stuck with him now. All of us are doomed." Hyunjin laughed hollowly and heartlessly.

"Enough." Chan looked up from the desk, eyes dark and menacing narrowing as he looked at Hyunjin who looked ready to pounce at any time.

"I don't think it's anywhere near enough." He hisses back at him, refusing to back down.

Innie dashes at this point, from his seat and immediately closer to Minho to get out of the way of whatever is about to happen.

"Hyunjin." Minho adds. "You should go be with the others."

Hyunjin turns to Minho and growls and before Minho can blink, Chan's moved from the side of the desk and is behind Hyunjin growling back.

Minho sighs, he was hoping to avoid this, but Hyunjin was too worked up and he had pushed it too far with Chan.

"I said enough." Chan says in a deadly quiet tone, as he reaches out one hand to latch onto Jinnie's shoulder with a tight grip. "You can be angry at me for as long as you like, but you will not respect your mates any further."

Minho watches Hyunjin's facial expression, he can see that he wants to reply and wants to retaliate but knows he can't. He knows that Chan isn't just his mate, but his King and his Alpha too, to do anything further would make it worse.

Regardless of how modern a pack that they were, there still remained a hierarchy between them all, it was the way it was for packs, even if Chan tried to give them as much freedom as he wanted, at the end of the day he still had the final say in things.

“Innie.” Chan turns his head to the unsure alpha in the room. “Why don’t you and Jinne go for a run? I think he needs to shake off a bit of energy before we go join the others.”

Innie raised his eyebrows unsure looking for Hyunjin and Chan but quickly realised it wasn’t a question, but an order.

“Sure hyung.” Innie replied and Chan released his hand on Hyunjin’s shoulder.

Hyunjin turned around quickly and met Chan face on, and for a second, Minho almost expected him to say something, but after a moment of tense understanding, Jinnie turned and left the room, Innie following quickly behind him.

Chan sighed, rubbing his neck and moving down to slump back into the one of the chair’s that Innie had been in.

“Are you going to start on me as well?” He questioned, continuing to rub his neck.

Minho moved gracefully from the door to sit in the chair next to him, feeling a tiny bit of sympathy for Chan, not that he really deserved it, but he was in a impossible situation in a sense.

“No. Nothing I could say is probably going to make you feel any worse than you already do.” Minho stated after a moment, looking at the alpha next to him.

“You can’t expect them all to welcome you back with open arms. Jinnie can’t stand him, you know him Binnie feels about it and then there’s you.” Minho pointed out, leaning back in the chair to get more comfortable.

Chan sighs, rubbing his eyes.

It had been a long few days of putting out fires and now Felix had managed to cause a full-blown explosion with his attempted escape yesterday. The full situation was truly a nightmare for him.

“Would you?” Chan wonders. “Welcome him with open arms.”

“Want doesn’t matter anymore.” Minho replies to him shaking his head and leaning forward. “We don’t have much of a choice anymore. It’s the only way forward.”

“We’re stuck with him.” Chan says out loud for the first time. “I thought it would be different this time around, we’ve waited so long for him and instead we’ve got this mess.”

“Can you look past it?” Minho asks the lingering question in his mind, sitting forward in his seat to meet Chan’s eyes. “His past? Do you think he could become one of us?”

Chan thinks for a moment. Really thinks. “It’s not as simple as that is it though? Even if we could find a way for this to work, which is a huge if, what about him?”

Minho smirks a half-grin at Chan. “What about him?”

“What do we do with him? The situation is worse than before, because we definitely cannot lock him up now, but let’s face it, he’ll try to escape again.”

“Then let him.” Minho replies simply as if he’s solved the simplest solution.

Chan’s eyes widen slightly in confusion, and Minho’s grin widens.

“If he escapes, we hunt him down. He’ll know that, especially now. Felix will never be able to escape us, regardless how hard he tries, because we’ll hunt him down and find him and bring him back.” Minho explains as if it’s the simplest thing in the entire world.

“You’re the King, you’re his alpha. He’s yours and ours now, the sooner he learns that the better.”

Felix’s room is wrecked. He’d managed to drag himself from his bed and basically destroy everything in sight since the other omega and the Seo whore had left him.

He wanted to try and claw his own skin off, to see if the stupid bite would go, but he knew deep down it never would. Mating marks were forever, the only way they would disappear is when a mate died.

Felix was many things, but he wasn’t a killer, and even if he wanted to. There were seven of them. He had seven mates, the odds were highly stacked against him. The only other option was to escape, but he couldn’t go far, they could drag him down and even then it would kill him too, not being without them.

He was screwed in every aspect of the word. Stuck in a castle, forever to be mated to a King who killed his pack, his family and the worst thing of all there was absolutely nothing that he could do about it.

What type of life was this?

The only option left really was death, that was always what they did when they were out of options. His friends were clearly all dead, and with his death maybe he could take one or two of his new mates with him, it was the least the King deserved.

“Are you done throwing a tantrum?” A dark voice called from near the door, causing Felix to stop in his train of thought.

He strained his head to see which of his so-called mates it was this time, but he couldn’t quite see, he was at the other end of the room, chest heaving, bandages ripped to shreds and resting against the wall from the sheer exhaustion

of it all.

All Felix does is growl, vicious and angry.

But instead the voice chuckles hollowly and after a few more footsteps, the King enters his room.

He looks around almost in an amused and impressed way, before moving and looking at Felix ripped sheets and taking a seat on the bed, so he was sitting directly opposite of Felix.

This was him. His Alpha.

The words almost made him physically sick.

Felix automatically attempts to push himself up from the floor wincing, annoyed with himself for being so weak in front of the enemy.

You should stay down. The voice in his head tells him and Felix see's red.

He hates that he's inside his head, hates that he can feel him, he hates that he physically now cannot live without him in every sense of the word.

Instead, Felix manages to push up against the wall and with some difficulty he manages to get half-up leaning against the wall, eyes narrowing at Chan, who has a strange sort of glint in his eyes.

"You're a stubborn one." Chan says. "But you might injure yourself further, so sit back down, Felix."

Felix does no such thing, instead he attempts to straighten himself more in defiance, even though his body is violently protesting. Felix wants nothing more than to slide back down the wall and sit back down and try to catch his breath, but he refuses to appear weak.

"That wasn't a question, omega." Chan says eyes narrowed into slits, almost as if he's trying to anger Felix even more.

In what world does he think that he'll ever listen to him? Alpha or mate. Felix will never listen to him.

Never.

When it becomes clear that Felix is ignoring what he's saying, he stands slowly, his eyes never leaving Felix's and slowly approaches him, like a predator approaching prey, until he's in front of Felix's pain-quivering body.

Felix pushes his body up straighter until he's full height and lets out a sudden yelp as his bad leg suddenly goes and he's on the way to the floor, before a hand reaches out and grabs his waist and then he's not on the floor anymore.

It takes a minute for Felix's pain filled brain to work, but the next minute, he's been set down back on the bed, and Chan's moved and sat down at the bottom.

Felix tries to dart forward, but then Chan puts a heavy hand down on his injured leg, and Felix can feel the tears forming in his eyes at the pain, but bites his lip and refuses to release them.

"I told you." Chan told him, his warm hand still resting on his leg. "You need to stay off of that and heal."

"You don't get to tell me what to do." Felix hisses violently at the alpha sitting in front of him.

Chan raises an amused eyebrow. "Last I checked I was your King...you're alpha."

A primal part of Felix wants to rip out his jugular and then pull him apart piece by piece.

"You will never be my alpha. My alpha is dead. He was murdered by you!" Felix exclaims to the devil in front of him.

"You should be thanking me." Chan said as if he didn't care. "You're free from him."

Felix wants to laugh, he really does, what was wrong with this King? Was he really this stupid? Then Chan adds quietly: "The others did."

The statement stops Felix in his tracks. "Of course they did, after you tortured them and put their heads on spikes for the world to see."

"Not all of them." Chan adds. "Some proved useful to me and as long as they remain so, they'll live."

Felix feels his heart stop, he has to be lying. He's trying to manipulate him. He saw them, all the heads of the people who he once called friends and comrades. They are all gone now.

"You're lying." Felix says, shaking his head violently.

"What were their names? Joon, Soobin and Yeonjun. It took a while, but they seemed quite open to giving us some useful information." Chan added without thought, carefully watching the omega.

Felix's head was reeling, was it really possible? Were the three of them really alive? How could he be sure and was this the alphas plan to manipulate him with those he had fought in arms with?

"Even if there were. They'll have told you nothing." Felix replies, thinking about the three of them, before he had violently been ripped from the only people he had known to this.

"That's where you're wrong. With the right...incentives they were more than happy to provide some more information on your red alpha." Chan added with a sem-smirk decorating his face.

"You tortured them didn't you? You disgusting pig. What type of King are you?" Felix spat out at him.

Chan sighed and squeezed Felix's leg a little tighter, causing him to wince. "Minho said you had a bit of a mouth, but no one ever taught you manners.

"But to answer your question, no I didn't. I didn't have to and it turns out they have quite a lot to say. I suppose you do, don't you Yongbok?"

Notes:

Sorry for the delay - as expected life has gotten in the way recently, but please enjoy this.

Chapter 8 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/175802376>): what they take, what i keep

Summary:

Felix is still reeling from the pack finding out his real name.

Notes:

Here we go :) - I'm trying to finish this and my new fic I've just started

He said it.

Yongbok.

Felix's breath stuttered in his chest. The room went quiet, but not silent — because the bond roared.

No one here was supposed to know that name.

Not the wolves who marched on his home.

Not the guards who dragged him in chains.

And definitely not Chan — the King who had taken everything from him, then marked him like he was something won.

That name belonged to a time before. To the boy who used to believe in safety. In family. In freedom.

His hands curled into fists at his sides. He didn't remember standing, but he was upright now, gaze locked on Chan's like it might burn a hole through his skull.

"How do you know that name?"

His voice didn't shake. Not yet. But his throat felt raw — from holding back too many things for too long.

Chan didn't answer at first. Just tilted his head, slow and deliberate. "It was in the report from the northern front," he said, almost casually. "One of the soldiers remembered a name shouted through the smoke. A boy running back into fire for his sister."

Felix flinched. Just a fraction. Just enough.

A spark of satisfaction flickered across Chan's face.

"You've been holding so much back," the King continued. "It seemed only fair to return something personal."

Felix hated how steady Chan's voice was. How calm. Like this was a conversation — not an ambush.

"You don't get to use that name," Felix said, low and cold. "You don't get to own that part of me."

"I already do," Chan said simply. "You just haven't accepted it yet."

Felix laughed.

It was too sharp, too sudden — brittle enough to crack his ribs from the inside.

"You're unbelievable," he said. "You mark me like a dog, drag me in front of your court like some... conquered trophy, and now you think using my name makes this some kind of reconciliation?"

"It's not meant to be reconciliation." Chan's eyes were calm. Too calm. "It's truth. You've been pretending you still belong to a war that's already over."

Felix stepped forward, teeth bared. The guards tensed, but Chan didn't move.

"You don't get to decide when it ended for me."

A low growl curled in his chest. The bond writhed under his skin like a live wire, twisting his instincts around in unfamiliar directions. It wanted to submit. He didn't.

Chan's gaze flicked down — not in fear, but in challenge. "Then tell them. All of them." He gestured lightly to the others in the room — council members, guards, wolves with watching eyes and unreadable faces. "Tell them who you are. Who you were. Who you think you still are."

Felix's mouth opened, but nothing came out. Because he didn't know anymore.

He was Yongbok in his mother's arms.

Felix when they branded him as prey.

Marked, broken, half-bonded, and so angry he could hardly breathe.

Behind Chan's shoulder, he caught movement — a flash of brown eyes and hesitation.

Jisung.

He wasn't seated with the council. He stood closer to the edge, tense, fidgeting, almost like he was waiting for—

"Felix," Jisung said, carefully. "You don't have to say anything you don't want to."

It landed like a lifeline. Soft, but real.

Felix blinked.

Chan's expression cooled instantly, like a storm front sliding in.

"You're interfering," he said without looking at Jisung.

"I'm speaking," Jisung replied. "There's a difference."

Silence again. A dangerous kind.

Felix turned his eyes to Jisung — really looked. Not at his posture or his nervousness, but at the sincerity in his voice. It wasn't pity. It wasn't strategy.

It was human.

He exhaled slowly. Not in surrender, but in control.

And then he spoke.

"My name is Yongbok," he said, voice quiet but clear. "And you don't get to say it like it belongs to you."

Then he turned, speaking not to Felix, but to someone behind him.

"Take him back to his quarters."

It wasn't a suggestion.

Felix didn't protest. Not because he agreed — but because he was tired. Bone-deep. Skin-raw. And the fire that had flared inside him moments ago was already dimming into something bitter and brittle.

Two guards moved. Not cruelly, but firmly. One took his elbow, the other shadowed his steps as he walked. No chains. No shove. Just presence.

It was almost worse.

As the door behind him shut, he didn't look back.

The room hadn't changed. Same clean linens. Same soft fire. Same gilded bars hidden in silk curtains.

Felix sat on the edge of the bed, a half-empty cup of water on the floor beside him. His head throbbed. The mark on his neck had scabbed, but still pulsed in waves — hot and quiet and wrong.

He hated how much it pulled at him when he let his mind go still. Like a breath on the back of his neck. Like a voice that hadn't spoken yet.

He didn't cry. He didn't scream. Those things had already been taken.

So when the knock came, soft and careful, he didn't move.

Not until the door creaked open and a familiar voice followed it.

"Felix?"

Jisung.

Of course it was him.

He stepped inside, half-lit by the fire, hands tucked into his sleeves. He didn't get too close.

"I—I can leave," Jisung offered quickly. "If you don't want—"

Felix cut him off without looking. "Why are you here?"

Jisung shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "You looked like you needed someone."

A beat passed.

"I didn't ask," Felix said, voice flat.

"I know," Jisung replied. "But... sometimes people don't."

The silence that followed wasn't warm, but it wasn't sharp either.

Felix let out a slow breath through his nose. The fire crackled.

He didn't tell him to go.

Jisung didn't move any closer. But he stayed.

Felix stayed quiet for so long, Jisung looked like he might leave after all.

But then Felix shifted — just enough to meet his eyes.

"You're not like them," he said, voice soft but sharp. "That's what you keep trying to show me. Like it's supposed to mean something."

Jisung opened his mouth, but Felix didn't let him speak.

"You stood there while he marked me."

Jisung flinched.

"You didn't stop him. You didn't look away. You didn't even try."

"I didn't know what he was going to—"

"Don't lie to me," Felix's voice cracked like ice underfoot. "You knew. All of you knew. You just didn't care enough to stop it."

Jisung's mouth pressed into a thin line. "It's not that simple."

Felix laughed — a short, bitter sound. "That's the first thing people say when they've already decided to do the wrong thing."

“I didn’t want him to hurt you,” Jisung said, quieter now. “I didn’t want any of this to happen to you.”

“But you let it.”

The words dropped like stones.

“I’m not your jailer, Felix.”

“No. You’re worse.” Felix stood now, slow and unsteady, but on his feet. “You want me to think you’re different, like you’re some kind of ally just because you didn’t hold the leash. But you’re still part of the cage.”

“I’m trying—”

“To what?” Felix snapped. “To feel better about yourself? To make me like you? To be the good one?”

Jisung said nothing.

The fire cracked in the hearth. Somewhere outside, footsteps echoed and faded.

Felix’s voice dropped, colder now. “You think because you bring me water and speak soft I’ll forget what side you stood on.”

Jisung met his eyes. “No. I think if I didn’t bring you water and speak soft, there’d be nothing left of you.”

Felix stared at him, chest heaving. Not from rage — not entirely. From restraint.

“You don’t get to say things like that,” he said, low. “You don’t get to act like you saved me.”

“I didn’t,” Jisung said. “I know I didn’t.”

“Then what the hell are you doing here?”

Jisung hesitated, then took a single step closer. Not enough to crowd. Just enough to be seen.

“Trying to be human.”

Felix scoffed. “You gave that up the moment you followed orders.”

“I didn’t follow that one.”

“Didn’t stop it either.”

“No,” Jisung said. “But I was the one who carried you out.”

Felix blinked.

“When you collapsed,” Jisung said, voice careful. “You were bleeding. You weren’t moving. Everyone just... stood there. Like you were already gone.”

His eyes didn’t leave Felix’s.

“I didn’t know what else to do. So I picked you up. I put you in that bed. I sat with you while you slept and—” He caught himself. Looked down. “I didn’t do enough. I know that.”

Felix’s throat felt tight. He hated that.

He hated that something in Jisung’s voice sounded honest.

He turned away, walking slowly back to the edge of the bed. He didn’t sit. Just stood with his back to him.

“I don’t forgive you.”

“I didn’t ask you to.”

Another beat. Then—

“I hate all of you.”

“I don’t blame you.”

The silence stretched between them like a drawn wire — delicate, dangerous, taut.

And then, quietly, Felix asked, “Why did you bring me water?”

Jisung didn’t answer right away.

When he did, his voice was small.

“Because no one else was going to.”

Changbin sat alone in the training yard, one arm resting across his knee, the scent of sweat and steel still clinging to the air. He wasn’t training. He hadn’t trained in days.

He watched the door Jisung had disappeared behind. Felix’s door.

He shouldn’t care.

He told himself he didn’t.

But he still remembered the look in Felix’s eyes when he whispered, “Help me.”

And now he couldn’t get it out of his head.

“You’re brooding again,” Minho said, stepping into view like a shadow that never quite left. “Want a medal?”

Changbin didn’t look at him. “Do you think it was a mistake?”

Minho arched a brow. “Being born? Joining the guard? Loving a King? You’ll need to be more specific.”

“Marking him.”

That made Minho pause.

“Marking him.”

That made Minho pause.

“What else would we have done?” he said at last.

Changbin didn’t respond.

Minho folded his arms. “Let him go? Wait for him to tear out Chan’s throat in his sleep? Pretend a bonded Omega from the losing side wouldn’t be a threat to the crown?”

Changbin’s jaw tightened. “He wasn’t a threat. He was bleeding.”

“And now he’s ours,” Minho said flatly. “That’s how survival works.”

Chapter 9 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/178446521>) : dreaming of running

The fire was almost out by the time Felix realized he’d been staring at the same patch of wall for hours.

His water cup sat untouched. The mark on his neck had gone from a throb to a deep, low burn — not sharp enough to distract him, but constant enough to remind him.

Yongbok.

The sound of it in Chan’s voice was still in his ears, wedged between his ribs like a blade he couldn’t pull free. No one here was supposed to have that name. They’d stolen it like they stole everything else.

He shifted his weight on the bed, restless. The thick blankets felt too heavy, the air too warm. Jisung’s words — the quiet insistence, the guilt he hadn’t tried to hide — lingered more than Felix wanted to admit.

He didn’t believe him. Not fully. But he also couldn’t forget the look in his eyes when he said no one else was going to.

Felix pushed himself to his feet. The room seemed too big when he was moving, and too small when he stopped. Every wall was another reminder: silk instead of stone, but still a cage.

Somewhere down the corridor, a pair of boots passed — slow, steady. Guard shift. He’d learned the rhythm of it in the weeks he’d been here. When they switched, there was a gap. Two minutes, maybe less, when the hallway outside was empty.

Two minutes was enough.

He crossed to the dresser and pulled out plain clothes — dark trousers, a worn sweater. Things that wouldn’t scream “royal pet” the second he stepped outside. No coat; it would slow him down.

The bond tugged, faint but insistent, like it knew what he was thinking. He ignored it.

He was still Yongbok, even if they wouldn’t call him that without twisting it into a leash. Yongbok didn’t wait to be rescued.

Felix pulled the sweater over his head and listened for the boots again. Once more past his door. A pause. The faint murmur of voices.

Shift change.

His pulse quickened. He grabbed the small folding knife he’d stolen from the breakfast tray days ago — dull, but sharp enough for a desperate swing — and crossed to the door.

Two minutes.

He turned the handle.

The corridor was colder than his room, the stone floor biting through the thin soles of his shoes.

No one. Just the soft hiss of torches and the faint draft from somewhere further down.

Felix slipped into motion, shoulders hunched, steps soundless. He didn’t run — not yet. Running made noise, drew attention. He’d learned that in other hallways, other nights, when the wrong sound meant the difference between slipping past a patrol and getting dragged back in chains.

He counted the doors as he passed. Seven on the left. Nine on the right. Then the broad double doors that marked the edge of the royal apartments.

The guards weren’t there. Good.

He pressed a hand to the wood, easing it open just enough to slide through. The echo of voices somewhere behind him made him move faster.

Past the council chambers. Down a narrower hall that smelled faintly of dust and polish. His heart was a steady drum in his ears now.

He didn’t have a map, but he remembered glimpses — windows in the distance, the way the sun hit a wall at a certain hour. He angled toward the light, weaving through side corridors until the air grew fresher, sharper.

Then — a door. Not the main gates, but something smaller, tucked between two buttresses. He tried the handle. Locked.

Felix’s jaw tightened. He glanced around — no movement — and slid the little knife from his sleeve. The lock was old. Rusted. The blade slipped in awkwardly, scraping metal on metal until something clicked.

He eased the door open.

Cold air hit him like a wave.

The courtyard spread out before him — grass trimmed close, stone walls high and unforgiving. No one in sight. He stepped out, closing the door softly behind him, and took a breath of air that didn’t smell like polished floors and other wolves’ dominance.

Freedom was still on the other side of those walls.

He scanned the perimeter, eyes catching on a stack of wooden crates shoved into one corner. Not enough to clear the whole wall, but close enough to try.

Felix's muscles coiled. He'd barely taken two steps toward them when a shadow slid across the grass in front of him.

"Going somewhere?"

The voice was sharp, familiar.

Changbin.

Felix didn't answer. He just moved — fast — toward the crates, instincts roaring over reason. The shout behind him blurred into the pounding of his own pulse.

He hit the first crate in a leap, claws dragging on the wood as he scrambled up. His sweater tore on a splinter. The second crate was harder, his legs already burning.

"Felix!"

He didn't look back.

Another leap — pain shot through his hands as the wood bit deep, reopening half-healed cuts. He gritted his teeth and pulled.

Almost there.

The crates rocked under his weight. He reached for the top of the wall—

A black shape crashed into the base of the stack. The impact rattled through the wood and straight into Felix's bones. He slipped, slammed his shoulder, and barely caught himself before falling.

He didn't need to look to know the black wolf at the bottom was Chan.

The impact rattled more than the crates — it rattled him.

Suddenly, the cold air of the courtyard was gone.

The scent hit him first. Pine, damp soil, and the faint trace of something achingly familiar.

Felix blinked, his heartbeat slowing as the noise of the roars faded into the whisper of wind through leaves. The ground beneath him was soft with moss, sunlight bleeding through the canopy above in lazy golden strips. For a moment, he didn't move. He was afraid that if he did, the illusion would shatter, and he'd be back in the stone-and-silver cage they called "his room."

He pushed himself up slowly, muscles trembling from the memory of the wall, the bite, and Chan's voice in his head. The woods were quiet—too quiet. No birdsong. No rush of water. Just silence.

Felix's stomach twisted.

This place looked like home, but there was no life here. No chatter of packmates, no scent of campfire smoke or stew. No warmth. Just empty trees and the weight of something watching.

"You're late."

Felix froze, his head snapping to the left. Out of the shadow of an old oak, a figure stepped forward. Tall. Broad-shouldered. Eyes the deep red-gold of a dying fire.

His Alpha.

Or... what was left of him.

"You should have jumped," the Red Alpha said, voice low and cold. "Instead, you let him mark you."

Felix's throat tightened. "You're dead."

The Alpha's mouth twitched—not quite a smile, not quite a snarl. "And yet here you are, still following orders in your head."

Felix wanted to deny it, but the weight of Chan's bite on his neck burned like a brand, and deep down he knew the truth—whatever this was, dream or memory, he wasn't free.

"Get up," the Alpha ordered. "You think the war is over? That your part in it is over? No, pup. They will break you. Piece by piece. Unless you break them first."

The air thickened, pressing against Felix's lungs. He stepped back, but the forest around them shifted, the trees bending closer until their branches wove into bars.

A cage.

The Alpha's eyes locked onto his, sharp and knowing. "Wake up, Felix. Before they teach you to forget which side you're on."

The words echoed—wake up, wake up—until they were no longer his Alpha's voice at all, but Minhó's, sharp and insistent.

And then Felix's eyes flew open to see Minhó leaning over him, one hand gripping his shoulder hard enough to bruise.

"Felix." Minhó's voice was low but edged, like a blade sheathed in velvet. "Breathe."

His chest was heaving, not just from the run — from the memory, the bite, the pull in his neck that wouldn't let go. His hands scrabbled for the crates, but Minhó's grip on his shoulder tightened until it was the only thing keeping him upright.

"What—" Felix's voice cracked, raw. "Where—"

“You nearly pitched yourself off the wall,” Minho cut in, eyes flicking over him like he was assessing damage. “Would’ve broken your neck before you made it halfway down.”

Felix jerked away, the motion sharp and instinctive. “Should’ve let me.”

Minho’s expression didn’t change, but something in his gaze hardened. “I’m starting to think you actually believe that.”

Before Felix could spit back, the sound of boots hit the courtyard stone — heavy, quick, purposeful. Changbin rounded the corner first, jaw tight, followed by Hyunjin and two guards.

Chan was last. Still in wolf form, he padded forward, black fur gleaming in the light, eyes fixed on Felix with a steady, unblinking focus.

Felix’s breath hitched. The wolf’s gaze dropped — to his neck. To the mark.

Minho stepped back just enough for Chan to close the space. The shift was fast, fur giving way to skin and muscle, until the King was standing there in human form, bare-chested, his hair damp with sweat.

“You’re done running,” Chan said, calm in a way that made the words heavier. “If you try again, I won’t stop at a mark.”

Felix’s laugh came out hollow. “What? Planning to chain me next?”

“If that’s what it takes.”

The bond between them thrummed — not warm, not welcoming, just a taut thread that pulled when he wanted to move, tightened when he tried to pull back.

“I’d rather die here than live as your—”

“You’re not dying,” Chan cut in, sharper now. “You’re mine. And until you stop trying to run, you’re not leaving my sight.”

“Your sight?” Minho asked from behind him, tone unreadable. “Or your side?”

Chan didn’t answer. His attention never left Felix.

The guards moved in — not rough, but firm. Felix didn’t fight them this time. Not because he was giving in, but because every muscle in his body felt like it had been wrung out and left to dry.

As they walked him back toward the apartments, he glanced once over his shoulder. Chan was still watching.

So was Minho.

Neither of them looked away.

The door to Felix’s room shut with a muted click. The guards stayed outside.

Chan didn’t speak until they’d reached the strategy room — a smaller chamber off the main hall, one with no windows and no curious ears. The table was bare except for a half-drained bottle of whiskey Minho had been working on earlier.

Changbin was already there, leaning against the wall, arms folded. Minho followed Chan inside and shut the door, the quiet thud final.

For a moment, none of them spoke.

Then Chan said, “He’s still thinking like a soldier.”

Minho raised a brow. “You expected him to start thinking like a pet after two weeks?”

Changbin’s glare slid to him. “That’s not what he means.”

“It’s exactly what I mean,” Chan said, voice even. “You saw it tonight. He doesn’t run without a plan. He was aiming for the northeast wall — the one closest to the old forest. The same forest his pack used to hunt in.”

Changbin’s frown deepened. “You think he thought he’d make it all the way back there?”

“He wasn’t thinking about distance,” Chan replied. “He was thinking about home.”

The word hung there, heavy.

Minho poured himself another measure of whiskey and tipped the glass toward Chan. “You’ve read the reports. You know what was left of his home. What’s the point of holding him here if you’re going to keep poking at the wounds?”

“Because,” Chan said quietly, “those wounds are the only thing keeping him from forgetting who he is.”

Changbin pushed off the wall, restless. “You keep talking like you want him to remember. I thought the point was to make him forget. To make him ours.”

Chan’s eyes flicked to him. “Making him ours doesn’t mean erasing him. If we do that, we’ll have a body, not a bond.”

Minho swirled the whiskey in his glass, watching the amber light shift. “So what? We keep him in a gilded cage until he decides he likes it here?”

“That’s one option,” Chan said.

Changbin shook his head. “Not with what he’s been through. You know what happened in the north — the siege, the burnings, the half-starved survivors. You know he lost more than just a pack. He lost everyone.”

The silence that followed was sharper than any argument.

Minho set his glass down. “Then maybe you tell him you know. Instead of acting like the only thing you see when you look at him is an Omega you can’t control.”

Chan's jaw tightened. "And have him think it's pity? That I brought him here because I felt sorry for him?"

Changbin's voice was low now. "He already thinks the worst of us. You can't lose more than that."

Chan's gaze dropped briefly to the table. When he looked up again, his voice was calm, but there was something colder beneath it. "I'm not going to tell him. Not yet. But we will find out exactly what happened to him after the siege. Every name. Every detail. If we know his ghosts, we can use them."

Minho's mouth curved — not quite a smile, not quite disapproval. "You sound like you want to break him."

Chan didn't blink. "I want him to stop running."

Felix stayed stretched out on the bed, eyes fixed on the ceiling until it blurred into nothing. He didn't want to think about the crates, or Chan's stare, or the way Minho's hand had felt like a shackle on his shoulder.

So of course, his mind slipped somewhere worse.

It was the smoke first.

Not the thin curl of a hearth fire, but thick, choking plumes that turned the sky the color of blood.

He'd been halfway down the ridge, racing for the village, when he'd seen the flames leap from the thatched roofs. The wind carried the heat to him before he reached the gate.

Yongbok!

His mother's voice had cut through the roar. High and urgent.

He'd pushed harder, boots skidding on the gravel path until he cleared the gate. The world inside was chaos — wolves running, some toward the fight, some away from it; children crying; the sharp tang of iron and fear in the air.

She was at the center of it, standing on the porch of their home with his little sister clutched tight against her chest.

Her hair was half-loose, her face streaked with soot, but her eyes found him instantly.

"Go!" she'd shouted, shifting his sister toward him. "Take her to the woods—"

He'd reached the steps, grabbed his sister — small, warm, trembling — and she'd buried her face in his neck.

"Mum, come with us!" he'd yelled, but she was already shaking her head.

"I have to find your father!"

And then the sound had come — the low, rolling snarl of an approaching patrol. Not theirs.

His mother's gaze flicked over his shoulder, and in that instant he knew she wasn't going to make it.

She'd pushed him toward the back gate, voice fierce despite the fear in it. "Run, Yongbok. Don't stop."

He had run.

Through the smoke, past the gardens, into the treeline. His sister's sobs had been hot against his collarbone, her small hands gripping his shirt.

He hadn't looked back until the firelight was gone. By then, the only sound left was the wind in the branches and the pounding of his own heart.

He never saw his mother again.

He'd carried her for hours that night, deeper into the forest than they'd ever been allowed alone.

Every step had felt heavier than the last, not because of her weight — she'd always been light, all narrow shoulders and knobby knees — but because of the silence that followed them. No shouts. No pursuit. Just the kind of stillness that felt wrong.

When he finally stopped, they were by the old watchpost, the one his father used to call the end of the safe trail. His sister had fallen asleep against him, her breath hot on his neck.

He set her down on a bed of pine needles, kneeling so she'd see his face when she woke. He tried to smile.

"It's alright," he'd whispered, brushing a curl of hair from her forehead. "We'll wait here. Mum and Dad will find us."

But she hadn't woken.

At first, he thought she was just exhausted. Then he noticed how shallow her breathing was, how her lips had gone pale, how the soot in her hair smelled sharper — metallic, like the taste in the air after a blade was drawn.

It was the smoke.

She'd been too close to it, too long.

He'd shaken her gently, then harder. Called her name. Told her to open her eyes.

She never did.

When the patrols came at dawn, he'd hidden her body under his jacket and kept running. He didn't even know if they were looking for survivors or stragglers to finish off — he didn't give them the chance to decide.

By the time he finally stopped running, he'd crossed into the mountains. Alone.

That was the night Yongbok died, too.

e'd buried her in the moss and marked the spot with a flat stone. He didn't stay long enough for the earth to settle.

He kept running.

Days later — thinner, slower, more animal than human — he'd found them.

A camp hidden in the folds of the mountains, guarded by the last of the Red Alpha's loyal wolves. And among them, wide-eyed but alive, was his second sister.

She'd run to him the second she saw him, arms tight around his ribs, face pressed into his torn jacket. For the first time since the siege, he'd felt something other than loss.

She was safe there. So were the others — the remnants of their pack, huddled together under the Red Alpha's protection. The camp wasn't much, but it was away from the front lines, and the Alpha had sworn to keep it hidden.

Felix had left the next morning. Not because he wanted to, but because someone had to hunt, scout, and draw the patrols away from the mountains. Someone had to keep the war from following the survivors home.

And he'd sworn — just like he had to his dying sister — that he'd come back.

That promise was still burning in his chest now, here, trapped in silk and stone. Every step toward the wall, every fight, every risk — it was all for them.

The fire had burned down to embers again by the time Felix's eyes focused on the room around him. His breath still felt uneven, the taste of smoke ghosting the back of his throat.

The quiet didn't last.

The latch turned, and the door swung open without a knock. Minhø stepped inside first, one hand still on the frame, his gaze flicking over Felix in that sharp, assessing way that made it impossible to tell if he was checking for injuries or weaknesses.

Behind him, Changbin filled the doorway like a shadow. His presence was heavier than Minhø's — not in words, but in weight. Even standing still, he took up space in a way that made Felix's pulse itch.

Minhø crossed the room without asking permission and crouched beside the bed. His fingers brushed Felix's jaw, tilting his head just enough to bare the mark on his neck. The touch was impersonal, clinical... but it still made the bond flare under Felix's skin.

"Still red," Minhø murmured. "Not healing clean."

Felix jerked back, knocking Minhø's hand away. "Don't touch me."

Changbin's jaw flexed. He stepped forward, not close enough to crowd but close enough that Felix could feel the heat radiating off him. "You keep running, you're going to get hurt worse than that."

"Good," Felix said flatly.

Minhø straightened slowly. "You talk like you've got nothing left to lose."

Felix's gaze flicked to him, sharp. "I talk like someone who knows exactly what he has left."

Something in the air shifted — not aggressive, but not safe either. Changbin's fingers drummed once against his thigh before he moved, closing the last bit of distance. He crouched in front of Felix, forearms resting on his knees, and for a second they were almost eye level.

"You think we don't understand?" Changbin's voice was low, steady. "You think you're the only one who's buried people you loved?"

Felix held his stare but didn't answer.

Minhø's hand landed briefly on Changbin's shoulder — a small, grounding squeeze — before he stepped back toward the door. "We're not here to convince you," he said. "We're here to make sure you're still in one piece when you finally figure out what you want."

Neither of them said goodbye. The door clicked shut behind them, and Felix sat there with the ghost of their touches — Minhø's fingers on his jaw, Changbin's heat in the space between them — refusing to admit they'd stayed with him longer than they should have.

The corridor outside Felix's chambers was quiet.

Too quiet.

Changbin didn't speak until they'd rounded the corner, far enough that the guards by the door couldn't hear them. His hands were in fists at his sides, the tendons in his forearms standing out like rope.

Minhø didn't ask what was wrong. He just steered them down the hall toward the unused war room — the one with the heavy curtains drawn and dust still in the corners.

As soon as the door shut, Changbin exhaled sharply and pressed both hands to the edge of the table, bowing his head. His shoulders were tight, the muscles working like he was holding back more than words.

"You can't keep doing this," Minhø said quietly, stepping in beside him.

"Doing what?"

"Letting him get to you." Minhø's tone wasn't sharp — more like he was feeling out the edges of the wound.

Changbin's laugh was short, humorless. "He doesn't get to me."

"Bin." Minhø's hand landed on his shoulder, fingers curling just enough to ground him. "Whatever you're trying with him... it's not working. You know that."

For a moment, neither moved. Then Changbin's head dropped lower. "He's just—" His voice cracked, almost imperceptibly. "He reminds me of Daon."

Minhø's brows pulled together. "Your brother."

Changbin gave a short nod. "The way he fights even when he's cornered. The way he looks at you like trusting you is the last thing he'll ever do. Daon was like that until the day he—" He stopped, the rest of the sentence swallowed by the tightening in his throat.

The door opened then, soft on its hinges, and Hyunjin slipped inside. His gaze swept over the scene — Changbin braced against the table, Minhø's hand on his shoulder — and he crossed the room without a word.

He didn't ask. He just stepped in close and set a hand on the back of Changbin's neck, the touch firm and warm. Changbin let out a slow breath, some of the tension easing under the weight of it.

Minho gave Hyunjin a small nod and stepped back, letting him take over.

Hyunjin leaned in, voice quiet but steady. "He's right. This... whatever the plan is with Felix — it's not working. We can't keep going like this." He hesitated, then added, "We need a new plan. Something that actually makes him stay."

Changbin didn't answer, but he didn't pull away either.

The three of them stood there in the muted light, the silence not empty this time, but solid — something they could all lean against until they had to step back into the war outside.

Chapter 10 (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/52588234/chapters/186375731>): Glass slippers and chains

The world returned in fragments — cold stone, the metallic taste of blood, and the crushing weight of teeth still phantom-pressed into the side of his neck.

Felix stirred with a low groan. Everything ached. His paws— no, hands now — were wrapped, bandaged in clean linen. He was back in his human skin, sprawled on soft blankets instead of splintered wood. That alone told him someone had carried him. He forced his eyes open.

White ceilings. Velvet drapes. Not his room.

Not freedom.

The sound of pacing drew his gaze. Changbin stood by the window, arms folded, jaw set tight. His scent was sharp, volatile, and it curled like smoke against the back of Felix's tongue. He didn't look at him — which was somehow worse.

"You're awake." The voice came from the other side. Seungmin, perched on a chair, was staring at him with unreadable brown eyes. There was a faint crease between his brows, like he couldn't decide if he was relieved or annoyed.

Felix tried to sit up and instantly regretted it. Pain streaked through his ribs, white-hot. He bit down on a hiss.

"Stay down," Seungmin said mildly, not moving to help him. "The physician says you cracked a rib when you fell. Lucky you didn't snap your neck."

"Lucky," Felix rasped. His voice sounded wrecked. He closed his eyes, swallowing dryly. He remembered the wall. The leap. The heads.

And then the black wolf's teeth in his neck.

His stomach twisted.

A new scent entered the room. Warm, electric — lightning coiled in fur. Chan.

Felix's body went rigid before he could stop it.

The King strode in like a thunderstorm wearing human skin, silver hair loose around his face, black clothes smeared with dust from the courtyard. His dark eyes fixed on Felix and didn't waver. The air thickened.

No one spoke.

Then Chan said, quietly, "You could have died."

Felix flinched. Not at the words — at the tone. Quiet, but not soft. There was a tremor under it, a growl chained too tightly.

"You should've let me," he croaked.

Changbin whirled from the window. "Don't start," he snapped. "You nearly took half the guard with you. Do you even think? Do you—"

"Bin," Chan cut him off. The single word froze Changbin mid-step.

Chan moved closer, until his shadow fell across the bed. His gaze dropped to the side of Felix's neck. Felix didn't have to follow it — he could feel it, the faint throb where teeth had broken skin. Not deep enough to scar. Deep enough to claim.

Felix clenched his fists under the blankets. "You had no right."

"I had no choice." Chan's voice was still quiet. And steady. "You were going to throw yourself off a wall."

"I would've made it."

"You wouldn't have." Something in Chan's eyes flickered — fear, maybe. It was gone too fast to be sure. "You saw the heads."

Felix's throat closed. He looked away. The heads. Joon's face could've been among them. Soobin's. Yeonjun's. He didn't know. He couldn't check. He couldn't let them see that crack in him.

"They were my people," he said softly.

"They were murderers," Changbin shot back.

"They were mine," Felix whispered, and hated how his voice broke.

Seungmin rose from the chair. “Enough,” he said. It wasn’t loud, but they both fell silent. “He’s barely conscious. This can wait.”

Chan didn’t move. He was still staring at Felix like he was trying to read the spaces between his bones.

“You’re marked now,” he said finally. “You understand what that means.”

Felix’s heart kicked painfully. He wanted to spit, to deny it — but the bond hummed faintly under his skin, warm and awful. It was a thread, thin but unbreakable, from him to Chan.

“You think this makes me yours,” he muttered.

“It makes you alive,” Chan said simply. “And it keeps you that way.”

Felix forced himself to meet his gaze. “I don’t belong to you.”

“Not yet,” Chan allowed. “But you will.”

Then he turned and walked out, the door closing softly behind him.

Seungmin left not long after, murmuring to the physician outside the door. Changbin stayed. He leaned against the wall with arms folded, eyes like flint.

“You think you’re clever,” he said after a long silence. “You’re not. You’re lucky.”

Felix closed his eyes. He didn’t want to fight. Not now.

Changbin pushed off the wall. “Whatever you’re planning, stop. Because if you hurt them — if you even think about it—” He crouched down so their faces were level. His voice dropped to a low, lethal growl. “I’ll end you before you can blink.”

Felix opened his eyes. They burned. “I’m not planning anything.”

It wasn’t a lie, not exactly. It wasn’t planning if it was only thoughts. Memories of Rachel’s laugh, of the promise he made to come back. Of the last glimpse of Joon’s terrified face as the chains dragged him away.

He had to get back to them. Somehow.

Changbin watched him for a long, long moment. Then he stood and left.

Felix lay back against the pillows, staring at the ceiling. The mark on his neck throbbed faintly in time with his heartbeat.

He was still trapped. Still theirs. And now... part of him didn’t know if he could ever get free.

The room was quiet after they were gone. Too quiet.

Felix lay there, body heavy as stone, but his mind ran frantic circles. The mark pulsed faintly under his skin like an ember he couldn’t smother. He could feel Chan if he reached for the bond — a distant hum, steady, infuriating. He slammed the door on it.

He had to. If he let it pull at him, it would rip open everything he was trying to keep buried.

Rachel’s face flickered behind his eyes. The sound of Joon’s laugh. Soobin’s snarky grin when they’d planned their doomed raid on the supply trains. Yeonjun dragging them out of the mud when Felix had nearly drowned in the northern marshes.

If they’re alive, I can’t let him find them.

If they’re dead, I can’t let him know I cared.

He turned his face into the pillow and breathed, slow and silent, until the ache in his chest dulled.

By afternoon, he had been moved.

Two guards escorted him back up to the private apartments. The silver cuffs were gone for the first time since his capture, but their weight lingered phantom-cold on his wrists.

They didn’t speak. Felix didn’t either.

When the door opened, the scent of the pack hit him like a wall. Sharp pine and steel from Changbin, warm honey from Seungmin, bright sugar from Hannie, citrus-salt from Hyunjin. And underneath them all, the steady thrum of Chan — the same note now echoing faintly in his own blood.

Every head turned as he stepped inside.

He froze.

They were all there — sprawled around the wide sunken den, lounging on cushions or curled in chairs. Conversations stilled. Eight pairs of eyes locked on him.

Felix’s instincts screamed to run.

“Come in,” Chan said softly from his place at the center. He wasn’t wearing his crown, but he didn’t need it. Authority rolled off him like heat.

Felix forced his feet to move. One step. Then another. The door shut behind him.

“Show them,” Chan said.

Felix’s stomach dropped. “No.”

Hyunjin’s head tilted, sharp-eyed. “No?”

“I’m not—” Felix started, but then Chan’s gaze met his and held, dark and steady. The pull of the bond tightened, subtle but unyielding.

His fingers curled against his side. Slowly, stiffly, he dragged the collar of his shirt down.

A hush fell.

The mark was small — a crescent of faint scabbed punctures, rimmed in fading bruise. But every wolf in the room could smell it. The claim. Chan's teeth.

Hannie made a tiny sound, like a startled whimper, before Seungmin's hand closed gently on his shoulder. Innie's eyes were wide. Minhø's face was unreadable. Hyunjin looked like he might break something.

"You marked him?" Hyunjin's voice was low, dangerous. "Without us?"

"He was about to throw himself off the wall," Chan said evenly.

"That's not—" Hyunjin surged to his feet. "You don't just—"

"Enough," Minhø cut in sharply. He hadn't moved from his place near the window, arms folded, expression cool. "It's done."

Hyunjin rounded on him. "You're fine with this?"

"No," Minhø said. "But I'm not fine with scraping him off the stones either."

Hyunjin's jaw worked. He sat back down hard, glaring at nothing.

Felix stood silent through all of it, jaw locked, nails digging crescents into his palms. He felt exposed, branded. He wanted to snarl, to scream, to rip the mark off his skin. He wanted—

He didn't even know what he wanted.

Chan finally looked away from the others and back to him. "It's not a full bond," he said quietly. "It won't force anything you don't want. It will just... keep you anchored."

Felix almost laughed. Anchored. Like a chain was an anchor, dragging him down. "How generous."

Chan's mouth tightened. "You don't have to like it."

"Good," Felix said flatly. "I don't."

Silence stretched.

Then Minhø spoke, calm and practical. "He shouldn't be alone tonight."

The words dropped like a stone. Felix's head snapped toward him. "No."

"You passed out from blood loss two hours ago," Minhø replied. "You can barely walk. You think we're going to just leave you to collapse again?"

"I don't need—"

"Hyunjin," Minhø said, ignoring him. "You take first watch."

Hyunjin blinked. "Me?"

"You don't sleep much anyway," Minhø said mildly. "And if he tries to bite someone, you'll enjoy it."

Hyunjin's mouth curved into a sharp little grin. "True."

Felix glared at them both. "I'm not some rabid pup."

"Then you won't mind the company," Minhø said smoothly.

Felix opened his mouth to argue again, but Chan's eyes caught his — not commanding, just... steady. Like the tide. Something in Felix faltered.

"Fine," he muttered. "Whatever makes you feel safe."

"It's not about feeling safe," Chan said quietly. "It's about making sure you are."

Felix didn't answer. He didn't trust his voice.

Hours later, the others drifted off one by one, murmuring low to each other as they disappeared into their rooms. The den grew quiet.

Hyunjin stayed.

Felix sat curled on the edge of the massive couch, staring into the dark window. Hyunjin sprawled in the opposite corner, all long limbs and loose golden hair, silent and watchful.

After a long time, Hyunjin said, "You're thinking about running again."

Felix didn't move. "I'm thinking about nothing."

Hyunjin's lips quirked. "Liar."

Felix turned his head enough to glare at him. "You don't know me."

"Not yet," Hyunjin agreed. "But I will."

Felix's chest tightened. He turned back to the window, to the faint reflection of his own face. The mark on his neck glinted dully in the moonlight.

Rachel, he thought. I'll find my way back to you. I swear.

No matter what it costs.

The scent of coffee and parchment hit Felix's nose long before he stepped into the outer hall. He stopped just short of the corner, bare feet silent on the marble. The voices were quiet but sharp-edged — Minhø's cool tone cutting through the murmur of the others.

"...it's not sustainable," Minhø was saying. "They're already asking questions."

"They can ask all they want," Hyunjin replied, irritation bright in his voice. "They won't get answers."

"That works for staff," Seungmin cut in, "but not for the nobles. They know someone's here. And they've started

whispering about the missing eighth.”

A pause. Then Chan, voice low and tired: “What are they saying?”

“That you found them,” Seungmin said. “And that you’re hiding them until you’re ready for the ceremony.”

Ceremony. Felix’s gut clenched. He remembered hearing of them in passing — the formal pack-claim ritual. Eight wolves standing in a circle, biting the chosen mate’s wrist one by one before the crowd. It marked the completion of the royal bond.

The Red Alpha used to call it the “coronation of cages.”

“They want confirmation,” Minho said. “If we stay silent much longer, someone will go digging.”

“Let them dig,” Hyunjin muttered.

“They’ll find where he came from,” Minho said flatly. “And then all of this falls apart.”

There was silence. Felix’s heart thudded.

“They can’t know,” Chan said finally. “Not yet.”

“Not ever,” Changbin snapped. “You want to tell them their ‘chosen’ mate is the Red Alpha’s pet? Half the nobles will call for his head. The rest will try to use him.”

“Then what’s your plan?” Minho asked sharply. “Because if we don’t give them something, they’ll force it.”

“We stall,” Chan said. He sounded like he was convincing himself. “We say he’s... recovering. That the bond isn’t ready yet.”

“Ceremonies can’t be delayed more than six months,” Seungmin reminded him quietly. “It’s law.”

“Then we change the law,” Chan said, and for the first time there was steel in his voice.

Silence again. Then Minho’s quiet sigh. “We can’t hide him forever, Channie.”

“I know,” Chan said. The words sounded like they cost him something. “But we’ll try.”

Felix slipped silently back down the hall before anyone could scent him.

He didn’t remember walking back to his room. One minute he was creeping away from the council room, the next he was sitting on the edge of his bed, heart hammering like a trapped bird.

They wanted to parade him. They wanted to stand him on a dais and tell the whole kingdom that the last of the Red Alpha’s wolves had been bound to their King.

If they did, Rachel was dead. So were Joon, Soobin, Yeonjun — if they were still alive at all.

If the world knew who he really was, they’d be hunted to extinction.

He dug his nails into his palms until the sting cut through the panic. He couldn’t let that happen.

He couldn’t let them see who he really was.

Felix sat on the edge of the bed, palms pressed to his eyes until he saw sparks. He couldn’t let them parade him. Couldn’t let them see. The mark pulsed under his skin like a brand.

A soft knock startled him. Then the door opened without waiting. Minho slipped in, quiet as a knife.

“You’re shaking,” Minho observed. “Bad sign.”

Felix jerked his hands down. “Get out.”

Minho didn’t. He came closer, voice low. “You heard us.”

Felix’s nails dug into his thighs. “The ball,” he spat. “You’re planning to—”

Minho cut in gently, “We don’t have a choice. They’re already sending envoys. Three weeks.”

Felix’s heart thudded harder. He gripped the blanket like a lifeline. “If they know who I am—”

“They can’t know,” Minho said simply. “We’re working on it.” Then, after a beat, “You should also know... the ruts are coming.”

Felix’s head snapped up. “What?”

“Winter rut,” Minho murmured. “It’ll make everything harder. For you. For us. For the bond.”

Another voice cut across the room — Hyunjin, leaning in the doorway now, golden hair falling loose. “Tell him the fun part,” he drawled. “We’re supposed to smile and dance while every Alpha in the room is on edge.”

Felix stared between them, breath shallow.

A ball. A rut. Three weeks.

If he didn’t escape before then, he might never escape at all.

Felix hadn’t moved from the bed by the time Minho’s hand closed, firm and unyielding, around his arm.

“Up,” the beta said. “They’re waiting.”

Felix wrenched back, but his body was weak, his ribs still tender. Minho didn’t even flinch.

“I’m not some pet you can drag around,” Felix spat.

“Then walk,” Minho replied evenly. “Your choice.”

Hyunjin leaned lazily against the doorframe, watching with that sharp little grin. “I’ll take him if you don’t want to get scratched, Min.”

“Don’t touch me,” Felix snarled.

Hyunjin’s grin widened. “See? He’s learning.”

Felix’s stomach churned as Minho tugged him out into the hall. The air was colder here, threaded with the scents of the others — pine and citrus, smoke and honey, and beneath it all that steady, storm-dark hum of Chan. The bond

thrummed in his veins like a warning bell the closer they got.

The council chamber was already crowded when they entered. Low light from the chandeliers painted silver across the polished floor. The rest of the pack was gathered around the long oak table: Seungmin with his hands folded neatly, Hannie fiddling nervously with a quill, Changbin pacing like a caged bear.

And at the head, Chan.

Felix froze.

Those dark eyes lifted, locking onto his, and the bond gave a little tug — subtle, unyielding. He wanted to tear it out of his throat. He wanted—

“Sit,” Chan said quietly.

The word slid into Felix’s spine like an instinct. His knees almost bent before he caught himself. He forced his chin high, teeth gritted, and moved to the empty chair only because Minhø pushed him forward.

Chan’s gaze lingered on him a moment longer, unreadable. Then he turned back to the table. “The Winter Ball. Three weeks.”

Seungmin nodded. “The nobles are restless. They’ll expect a formal presentation.”

“They expect a ceremony,” Changbin snapped, still pacing. His voice carried a low growl. “And they’ll get neither.”

“They’ll get something,” Minhø corrected smoothly, settling into his seat. “Or they’ll start pulling strings. And if they drag him out themselves—” He nodded toward

Felix without looking. “We lose control of the story.”

Felix’s skin prickled under their eyes. He wanted to vanish. He wanted to scream.

“They can’t know who he is,” Chan said firmly.

“They’ll ask questions,” Seungmin reminded him. “And we can’t stall forever. The law—”

“Then we change the law,” Chan cut in, same words as before, but this time edged with steel.

Silence followed. Even Hyunjin, sprawled like a cat in his chair, arched a brow.

“And in the meantime?” Minhø asked.

“We keep him alive,” Chan said simply.

The words landed heavy. Felix’s throat closed. Alive. Caged. Displayed like a jewel at a feast while his people burned.

And then Hannie, voice quiet but trembling with the kind of courage Felix had almost forgotten, asked the question that twisted the knife deeper:

“What happens when rut hits?”

Every gaze in the room sharpened. The air thickened.

Chan didn’t answer immediately. When he did, his voice was low. “We hold the line.”

Felix’s heart hammered so hard it hurt. He gripped the edge of the chair until his knuckles ached.

A ball. A rut. Three weeks.

If he didn’t find a way out, he’d never see Rachel again. Never know if Joon or Soobin or Yeonjun had survived.

Never be free.

Felix kept his eyes fixed on the table as voices rose and fell around him. It didn’t matter what they called this — planning, strategy, damage control — it was still a cage.

“The invitations are already sent,” Seungmin was saying. “Every province. Every noble house. We can’t back out now.”

“We can’t parade him either,” Changbin snapped. His pacing hadn’t slowed. “You think they’ll just clap politely when they smell Red blood? They’ll riot.”

“They’ll riot if they think we’re hiding something,” Minhø countered. “Better to give them a story than let them invent one.”

“A story,” Hyunjin drawled. He stretched like a cat in the sun, golden hair falling into his eyes. “Dress him in silk, tuck him on Chan’s arm, and smile while the court salivates. Lovely story.”

Felix’s stomach turned.

Chan finally spoke, voice steady as stone. “There will be no ceremony. No public bond. Not yet. If they want to see him, they’ll see him under my protection. That’s all.”

Silence fell. It wasn’t agreement, but no one pushed further.

Felix risked a glance at the King. Chan’s dark eyes were fixed on the table, silver hair catching the lamplight. Calm, immovable — but there was tension in the set of his jaw, the faint tightness around his mouth. Felix hated himself for noticing.

“Then it’s settled,” Minhø said after a beat. “We prepare for the ball. Keep the nobles distracted. Keep him contained.”

Felix’s hands curled into fists in his lap. Contained. Like a weapon in a sheath.

“And the others?” Seungmin’s quiet voice cut through, unexpected.

Felix’s head jerked up.

“The prisoners,” Seungmin clarified. His gaze flicked to Chan, unreadable. “There are still a few left from the northern campaign. The nobles haven’t forgotten them either. Some have started asking where they are.”

The world tilted under Felix’s feet. His pulse roared in his ears. Still alive.

He’d told himself the worst of them were already gone — that when the heads went up on the walls, it was all of them. But Seungmin’s voice cut through the haze, calm and merciless: “The prisoners. There are still a few left from the northern campaign.”

Not Rachel, not Joon, not Soobin or Yeonjun — they were still out there, hidden if the world had any mercy left.

No. These were the others. The ones dragged down beside him in chains. The ones who hadn’t been fast enough, strong enough. His people too.

And they were still here. Still rotting in the King’s cells.

Chan’s answer was steady, ironclad. “They’re not to be touched.”

Changbin growled low. “They’re dangerous.”

“They’re survivors,” Chan said. “Until we decide their fate, they stay where they are.”

Felix’s chest burned. Alive. Caged. And now the nobles were circling like vultures, asking questions.

If they dug deep enough, if they learned the truth, then not just Rachel and the others were doomed — these few prisoners would be paraded, used, broken. And Felix would be next.

That changed everything.

Close (#)